



VIVALOK COMICS

♦ folk tales from India ♦

# MADH PRADESH

Vol.1





❖ folk tales from India ❖

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Vol.1

Compiled by **Nand Kishore Sharma**

Drawings by **Vikram Nayak**



**VIVALOK COMICS**



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Drawings by **VIKRAM NAYAK**

Colourists:

**JAGDISH AICH ROY:** *The Revenue Collector, The Clever Women, Panihari, Edani*

**RITA TOTEJA:** *Teelan's Gateway, The Retreat of Hakda*

**KAUSHIK SINHA:** *Madechi Mumal, Buto Pir*

**AARON DEVA DANA:** *The Haunted Haveli*

**SUJATA BANSAL:** *Behead and get Rich*

**Nand Kishore Sharma**, a retired teacher, is a poet and author of several books on the history and culture of Jaisalmer. He is the single-handed founder of the well-known Jaisalmer Folklore Museum. He lives in Jaisalmer with his family.

**Vikram Nayak** does cartooning, painting and illustrations with equal felicity. He has won numerous awards in different competitions. He has illustrated for many Indian & foreign magazines, newspaper and TV serials. At present, he is painting canvases for his forthcoming exhibition.



About our mascot – the mascot of Vivalok Comics is called Roama. She is a curious and vivacious eighteen-year old girl, fond of travelling and adventure. She is passionate about folklore and keeps recording her experiences with Dicti, her friend the dictaphone.

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ISBN NO. 81-88251-03-8

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Published in April 2002  
by Viveka Publications  
25C DDA Flats  
Shahpurjat  
New Delhi 110049  
Ph: 91 11 6492473, 6492439  
E-MAIL: india@vivekafoundation.com

Printed at  
Viola Packaging Pvt. Ltd  
188, Patparganj Industrial Area  
Delhi-110092



# MYTHS, LEGENDS AND FOLK TALES

For those who want to make sense of the world we are in, myths, legends and folk tales offer rich cultural resources of existential help. These three different genres can be grouped under the larger umbrella of 'folklore'. According to the well-known folklorist, A.K.Ramanujan, "wherever people live there is folklore."

Myths are not about gods and goddesses as they are normally perceived to be. They deal with impossible life situations that are part of the human predicament. Accidents, unnatural births and deaths, nature's fury, the relationship between character and destiny, good and evil, conflicts in unjust societies, human action and supernatural designs, origin of events, places, objects, species and ideas about the cosmos, are some of the recurrent themes of Indian myths. Given the intensity of such themes, only gods and goddesses can sometimes unravel these formidable issues. Pan Indian myths share ritual and festival calendars with highly varying regional, local and village temple myths. Major Indian festivals, belief systems, temple ceremonies, life cycle ceremonies, ritual components and behavioural patterns within rituals depend on what myths say. The major corpus of pan Indian Hindu myths contains eighteen major divisions, and their millions of variations and versions have led to the creation of exquisite temple architecture, stone and bronze sculptures, music and dance. Jain and Buddhist myths also have a pan Indian character with regional variations in architecture, sculpture, ritual and life cycle ceremonies. Indian tribal myths address the same set of issues but they do not share anything with the pan Indian myths.

Legends are historical chronicles, not necessarily authenticated, of local heroes, antiheroes and their heroic deeds. The local heroes of legends could be bandits, chieftains, caste and clan leaders and their heroic deeds could be

winning a local battle or getting a cowherd from a rival group. Indian legends normally contain detailed descriptions of local geography, infusing places with historical meaning. Forts, monuments, gathering places, courses of rivers, mysteries of thick forests, mountain terrains, secret spots in the ocean, navigating the deserts, animal behavior and man's struggles against nature, form the corpus of Indian legends. The heroic values embedded in the legends are often communicated through various folk forms, and over a long passage of time legends blur into myths.

Folk tales are about everyday life. Mundane, earthy and honest negotiations that they are, their meanings are best found in their original contexts. The telling of a tale warrants a situation. Situations create versions of tales. So any tale at any given point is always retold. With every retelling, tales travel - across generations, languages and regions. They are like floating magic carpets which entertain, educate, fret, fume, take vengeance or amuse. They reveal politics of kinship and inter-community relationships in a particular region. We learn the natures of mothers, fathers, brothers, various in-laws, sons, daughters and grand parents from folk tales much more than contemporary psychology would reveal. Through folk tales we understand the roles of brahmins, fakirs, sadhus, astrologers, magicians, kings, clowns, fairies and genies and various animals. Could we have made sense of the world in this manner without folk tales? Folk tales also generate proverbs and riddles.

It is important to understand the general functions of myths, legends and folk tales in our society so that we appreciate their particular contexts. The ultimate challenge is not about making folklore accessible but it is about making 'folklore in context' accessible to audiences. And that is what this series intends to do.

M.D.Muthukumaraswamy.  
National Folklore Support Centre, Chennai

The NFSC is dedicated to the promotion of Indian folklore research, training, networking and publications.





# THE MAGIC OF



stopover for pilgrims to the Hinglaj Shakti Peeth and Mecca and Medina. The daunting sands of Registan protected Madh Pradesh, shielding it from the marauding forces of the north western provinces.

**M**adh Pradesh is well known for its craftsmen. Particularly well known are the Gordan temples in stone, many of which have been desecrated. 'Smaraks' are pillar like structures, which commemorate great warrior heroes such as 'junjhar' and 'lohati'.

**I**n the eastern part of the Thar Desert, close to the North Western border of India, stands the beautiful city of Jaisalmer, once ruled by the mighty Chandravanshi Bhatti Rajputs. Legend has it that Maharawal Jaisal laid the foundation of the city in 1156 A.D. after consulting a local hermit by the name of Eesul. Trikuta was the hill chosen and Jaisal abandoned his old fort at Lodarva, the earlier capital, and the most important urban centre of Madh Pradesh. It is believed that the ancient river Saraswati used to flow in an invisible form as the Kak River near the city.

**T**hus Jaisalmer became the new capital of this region called 'Madh Pradesh'. The men of this land were called 'madu' and the women, 'madechi'. The beautiful Madechi Moomal is Madh Pradesh's most legendary character, celebrated in poetry and song.

**M**adh Pradesh was located on an important trade route that connected Gujarat, and Malwa in Madhya Pradesh to the Punjab and Sindh and further, to Arab lands and even China. It was also a

**T**he folklore of Madh Pradesh covers a range of forms such as ballads, tales, fables, proverbs, arts and songs. The musical tradition in the form of balladic songs is so rich and vibrant that it has captured the imagination of generations who have kept it alive to this day. The region is known for its 'mand' style of singing. The songs describe the pain of desert women separated from their men who are away earning a livelihood, the beauty of birds and animals, the advent of rains and the magnificent desert wind. Known as 'jhorava geet', these songs are sung by the men and women of the Manganiar, Dholi and Langa communities.

**T**hough predominantly inhabited by Hindus, Madh Pradesh has a large population of Sindhi Muslims. The language spoken here, and reflected in the folklore, is a curious mix of Sindhi, Marwari, Punjabi, Gujarati and Kuchhi.

**W**hat is most unique to this dry, drought prone region is its interesting use of colour. The landscape is an endless brown splashed with the green of the shrubs and trees like the khejri, aak, jal and ker as well as the most colourful clothes.



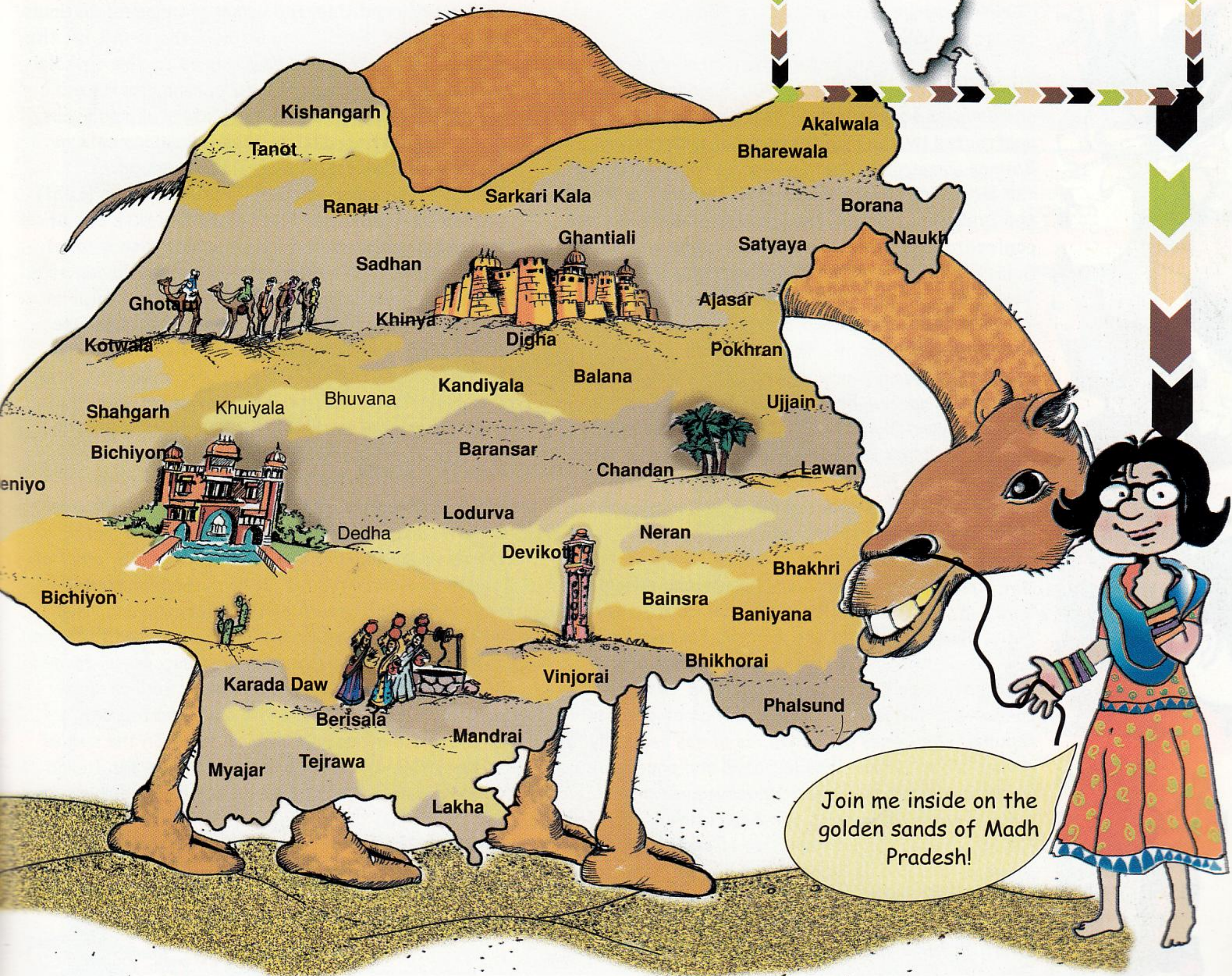
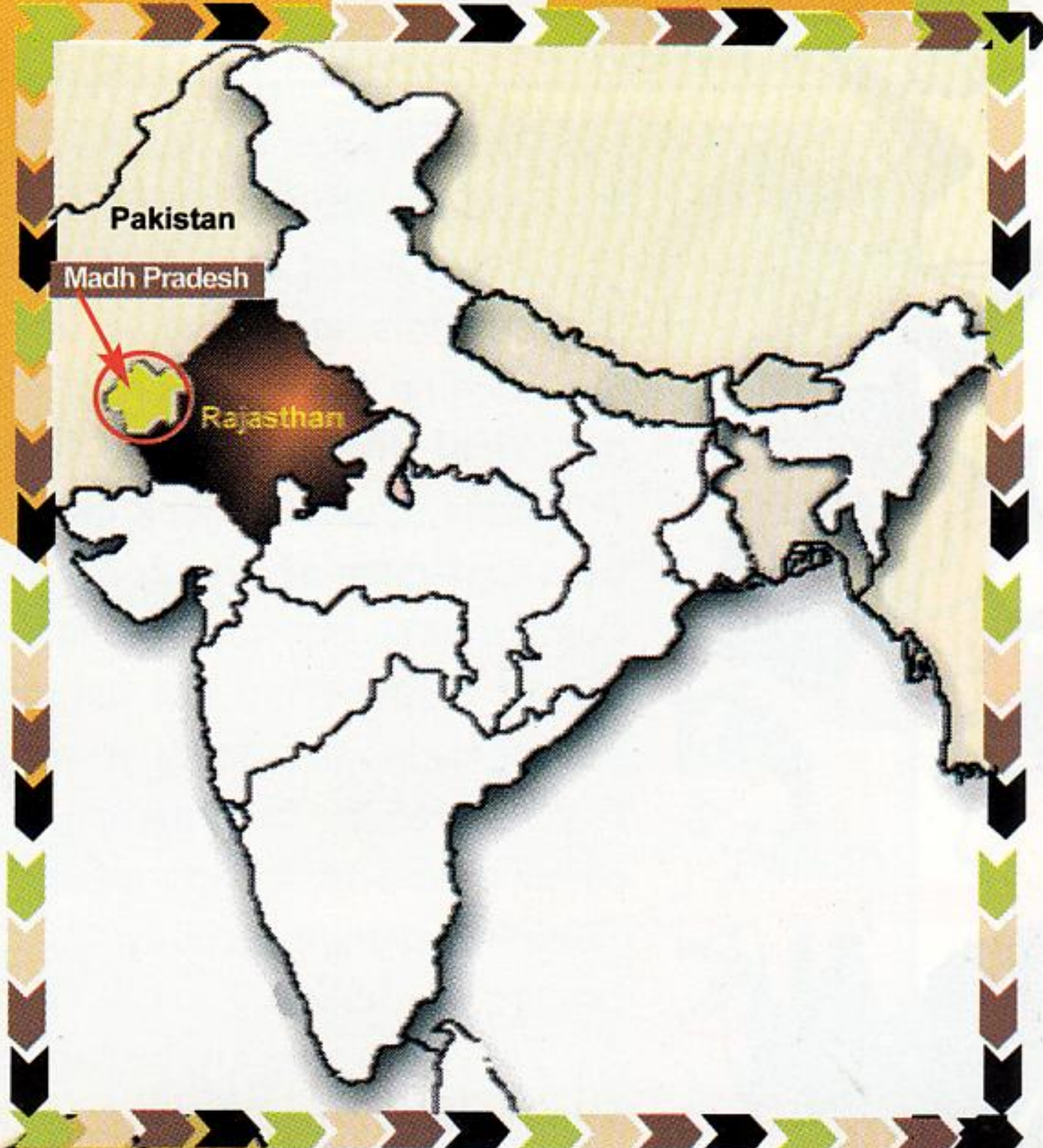
# MARUDHARA

A popular song goes thus:

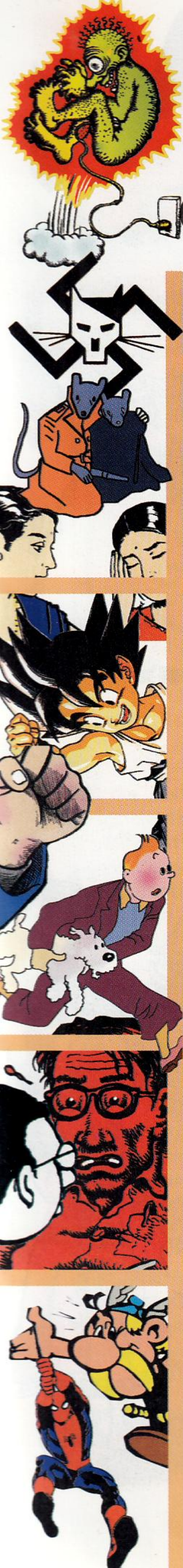
*I stood atop a hill  
And saw the best of all lands  
Where men are dressed in white  
And women adorn colours bright*

And about the ubiquitous camel which is the lifeline of Marudhara and the most loved friend of yearning lovers, as in the ballads of *Dhola Maru* and *Madechi Moomal*,

*Marudhara has produced gems three  
First is Dhola, Marwan second  
And camel, the third.*







# the world of comics

*Comics is often thought of as the joining of two art forms: writing and drawing. But what happens between the panels isn't about either, it's the author's imagination.'*

Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*

Comics are visual narratives which successfully tap the unexplored realms of imagination among all its readers, children and adult alike.

Comics have had a turbulent history so far. Besides raising the value of imagination and proclaiming the triumph of the good and the beautiful, they have also faced accusations of being frivolous, unclean, dark and negative. But that would be a criticism of the content and not the medium. Comics have been indomitably resilient and have a way of rising from the ashes every time they have been proclaimed dead! What's kept them alive are their sheer reading pleasure and their place as social commentators, mixing information with imagination. Their relevance, equally to young and old, cannot be denied.

The medium defies the logical style of narration and provides scope for broadened horizons and unlimited perceptions. Which of us has been left unaffected by the magical world of superheroes — Batman, Superman, Captain America and Mandrake the Magician? Or the mischief of Dennis the Menace, the cynicism of Calvin, the laziness of Garfield, the confrontations between the Romans and a group of Gauls led by Asterix, or the adventures of Tintin? The list is endless. We all have mentally mimicked the world of these characters, which though unreal, provided an insight into the real world.

Comics are now viewed as the unfolding of alternative spaces. From 1865, when the first comic strip *Max und Moritz* was introduced in German papers, upto the 1960's, which experienced a 'dark' phase in comic history, this art form has covered many milestones. Besides projecting a lopsided and humorous view of life through lovable and unforgettable characters, it raised issues on terrorism, human rights, anarchism, racism and sexual politics. Art Spiegelman's legendary holocaust creation, *Maus*, shook the world and won the Pulitzer Prize.

It was in the US that the comic form flourished. Joe Sacco, another legend, catapulted comics into the mainstream definition of acceptable reading. *The Times* published his strips regularly. But it was Robert Crumb who initiated and popularised a whole new genre in comics- 'underground comics'. He did a lifetime of work on the American way of life. His (much too) honest depiction of reality and his subversive brand of humour won him as many accolades as criticism.

According to McCloud, comics, or story telling through visuals, have an older history than

what is commonly believed. He says, "Comics is about three thousand years old and maybe as old as art itself." Some examples, though they adopted a different style, are ancient Egyptian wall paintings on domes and the walls of ancient Indian temples, such as the murals of Kerala.

Over five hundred years ago, there were European broadsheets that were more contemporary in form and narrated events in pictures. European comics were the first to make an impression and each nation had its own little term of endearment for the comic. In France, they used the term 'BDs' or 'Bandes Dessinees', as a term for drawn strips. The Italians called them 'fumetti' or 'little smokes' because the blurbs looked like little smoke clouds.

It was from France, however, that the next international comic wave began. Georges Remi's *Tintin* and Goscinny and Uderzo's group of indomitable Gauls led by Asterix, Obelix and Getafix the Druid, hit the readers' imagination in such a way as to give a whole new meaning to comics. The Europeans also blazed a new trail in science fiction and historical portrayals.

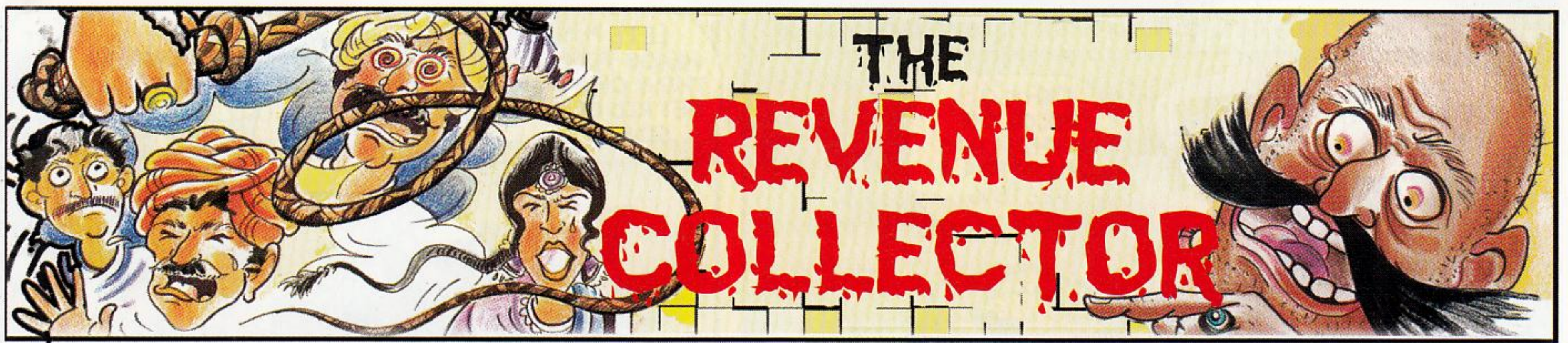
Almost parallel to these developments in comics was the evolution of Japanese comics ('Manga'). The emergence of Tetsuwan Atom (1951) created by Tezuka set the ball rolling with one of the best loved science fiction comics with a robot like character. This interesting representation of a super hero who fought for peace is best known as 'Astro Boy'. Apart from science fiction, Japanese comics lent themselves well to thrillers and underground comics. In the 80's Kiji Nakazawa's *General of Hiroshima*, a vivid, thought provoking autobiographical work once again brought out the maturity of style in the Japanese Manga.

In the Indian context, comics are but a logical continuation of the strong pictorial and narrative tradition that it already has. The 'pata chitras' or scroll paintings of Bengal and the 'phad' of Rajasthan exemplify this. Both these techniques combine the excitement of both the oral and visual form of story telling. Anant Pai who started the *Amar Chitra Katha* series made the first successful foray in this domain. Comics, he proved, were worthy of narrating sacred epics like the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana* and other mythological tales. In the sixties and seventies, *Indrajal Comics* brought to the Indian doorstep almost every favourite comic world character.

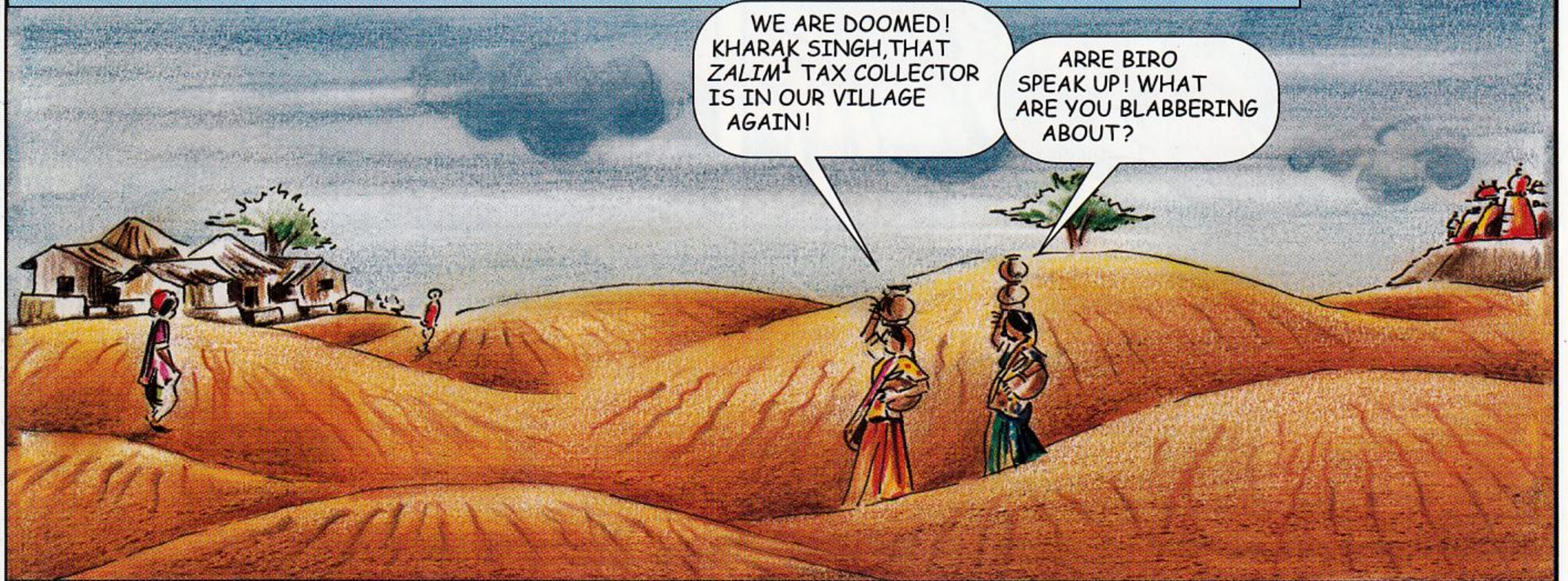
Today, there is a growing movement of comic book lovers who are trying to inject new life into this wonderful art form.







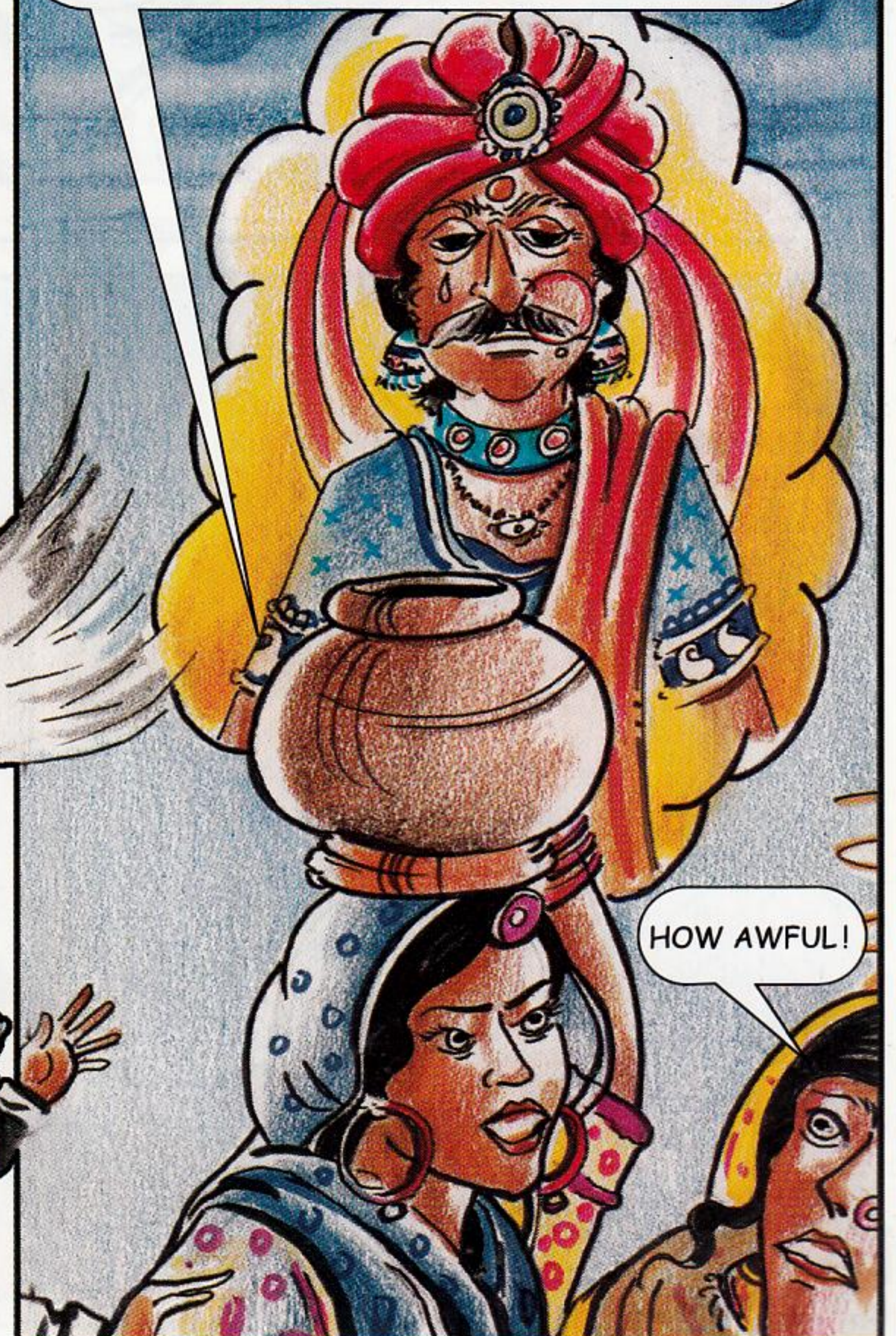
THE PEOPLE OF MADH PRADESH HAD TWO FORCES TO COUNTER - THE HOSTILITY OF NATURE AND THE TYRANNY OF THEIR RULER. TO ADD TO THEIR MISERY WERE THE GREEDY AND RUTHLESS REVENUE COLLECTORS. ONE DAY IN HEKDI... VILLAGE.



KHARAK SINGH'S TALES OF CRUELTY WERE KNOWN FAR AND WIDE.



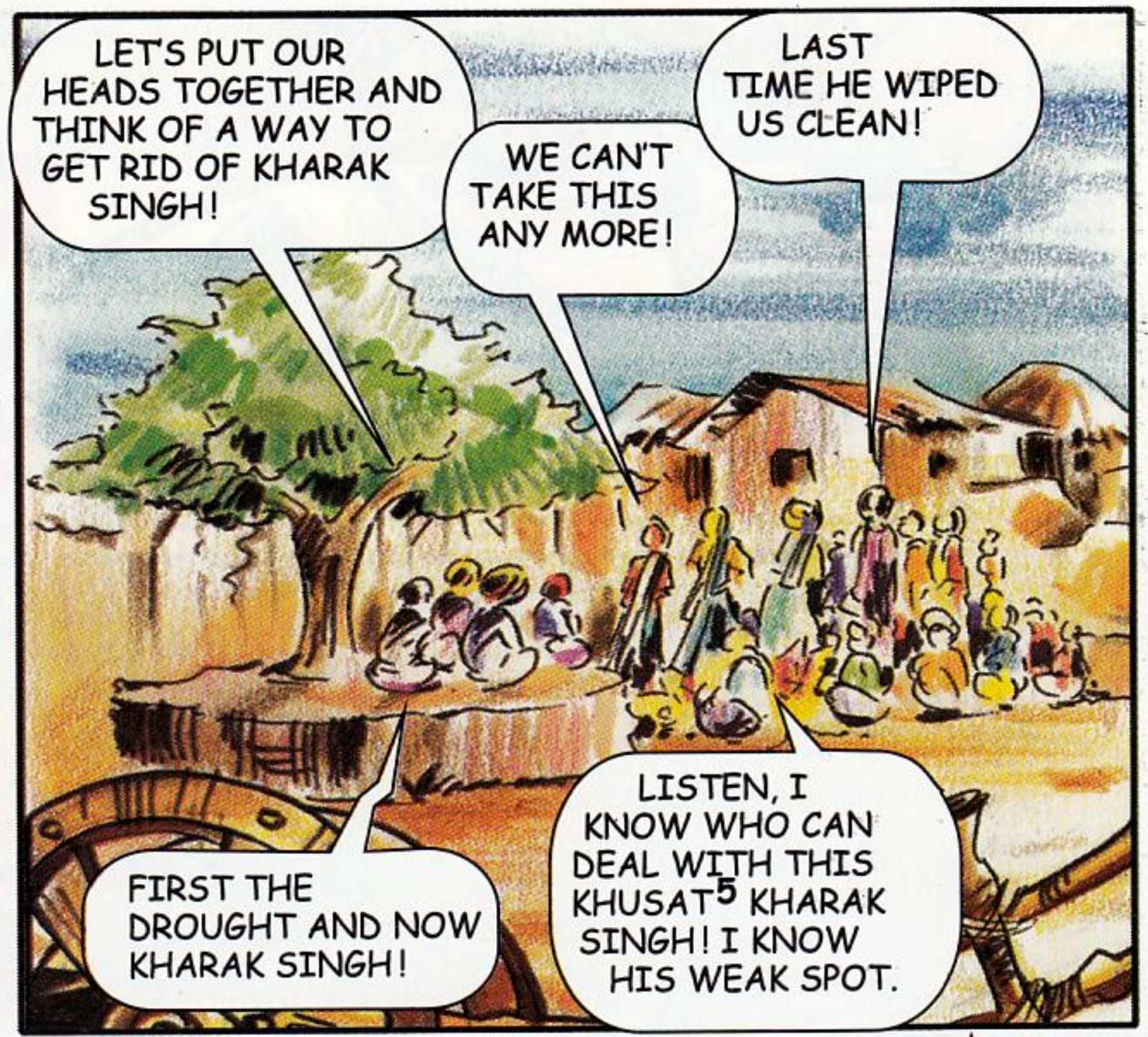
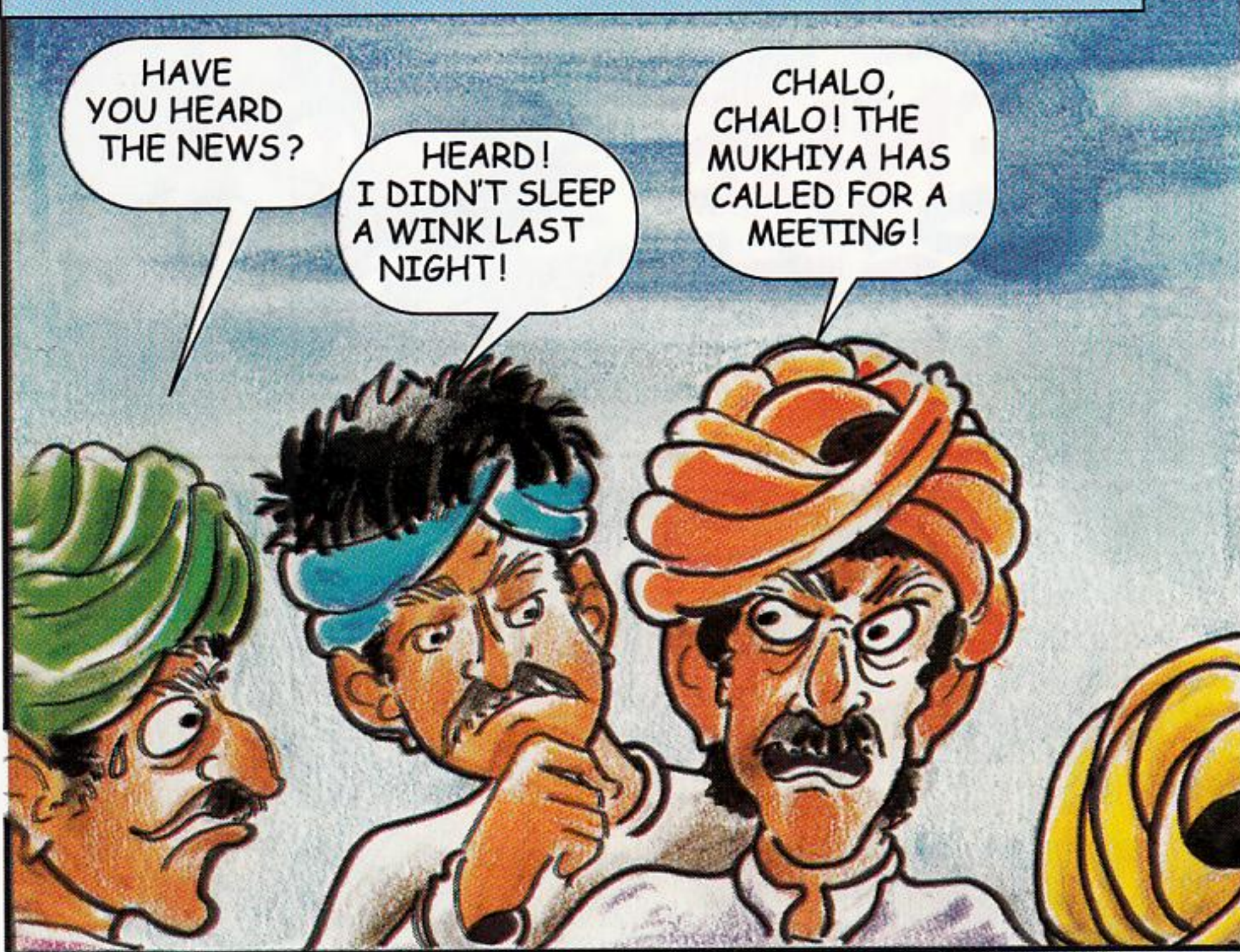
LAST YEAR, AT MY PIHAR'S<sup>2</sup> HE MADE KISHORE BHAI WALK THROUGH THE VILLAGE IN HIS WIFE'S CLOTHES! JUST BECAUSE THE POOR OLD MAN HAD ASKED FOR TWO DAY'S MOHALAT<sup>3</sup> TO PAY THE LAGAAN<sup>4</sup>!



1. Cruel. 2. Natal home. 3. Reprieve. 4. Tax on agriculture.



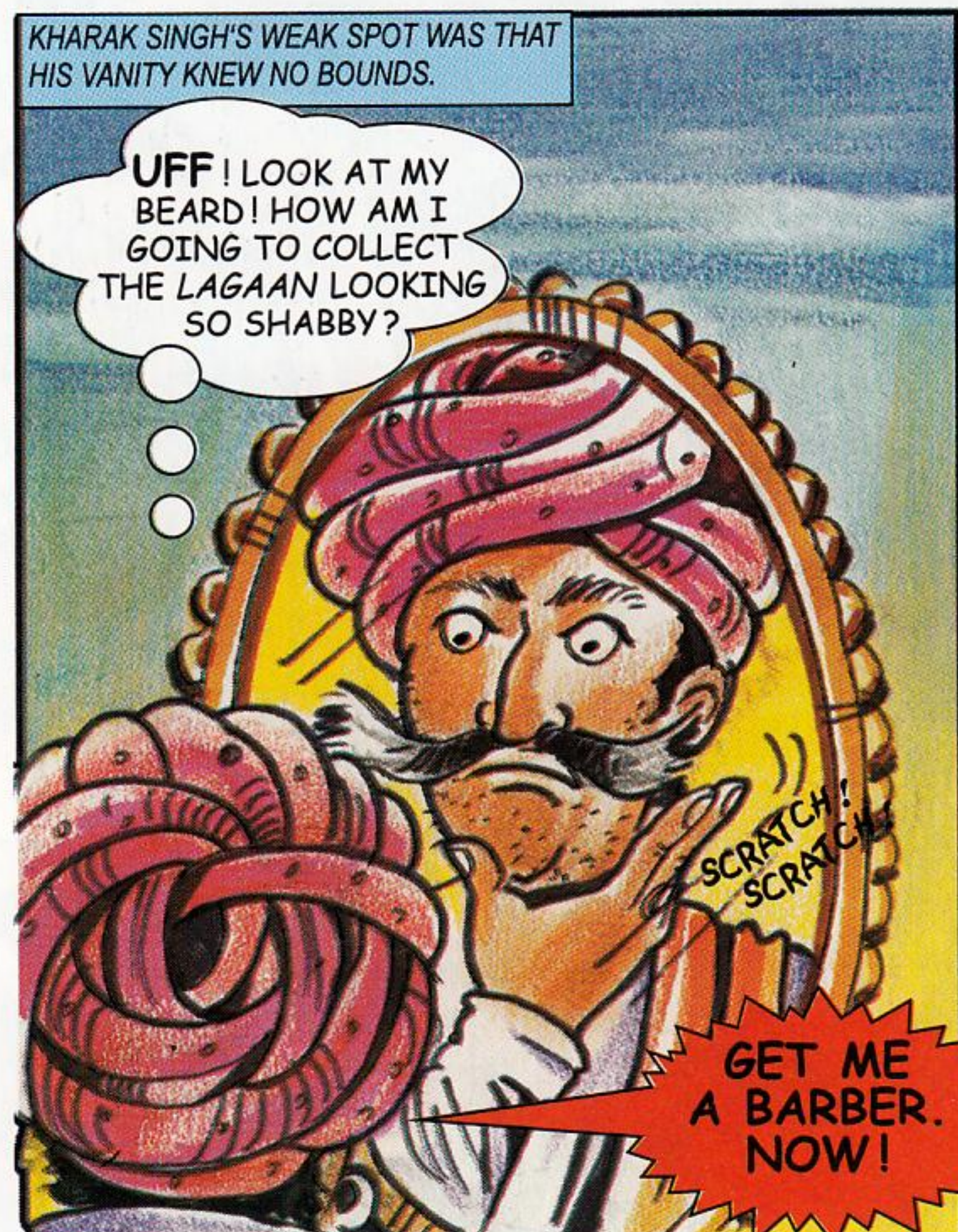
HEKDI VILLAGE TREMBLED WITH THE NEWS OF KHARAK SINGH'S IMMINENT ARRIVAL.



KHARAK SINGH'S ARRIVAL DIDN'T BELIE THEIR EXPECTATIONS. HIS MEN DESCENDED ON HEKDI LOOTING AND PLUNDERING.



KHARAK SINGH'S WEAK SPOT WAS THAT HIS VANITY KNEW NO BOUNDS.

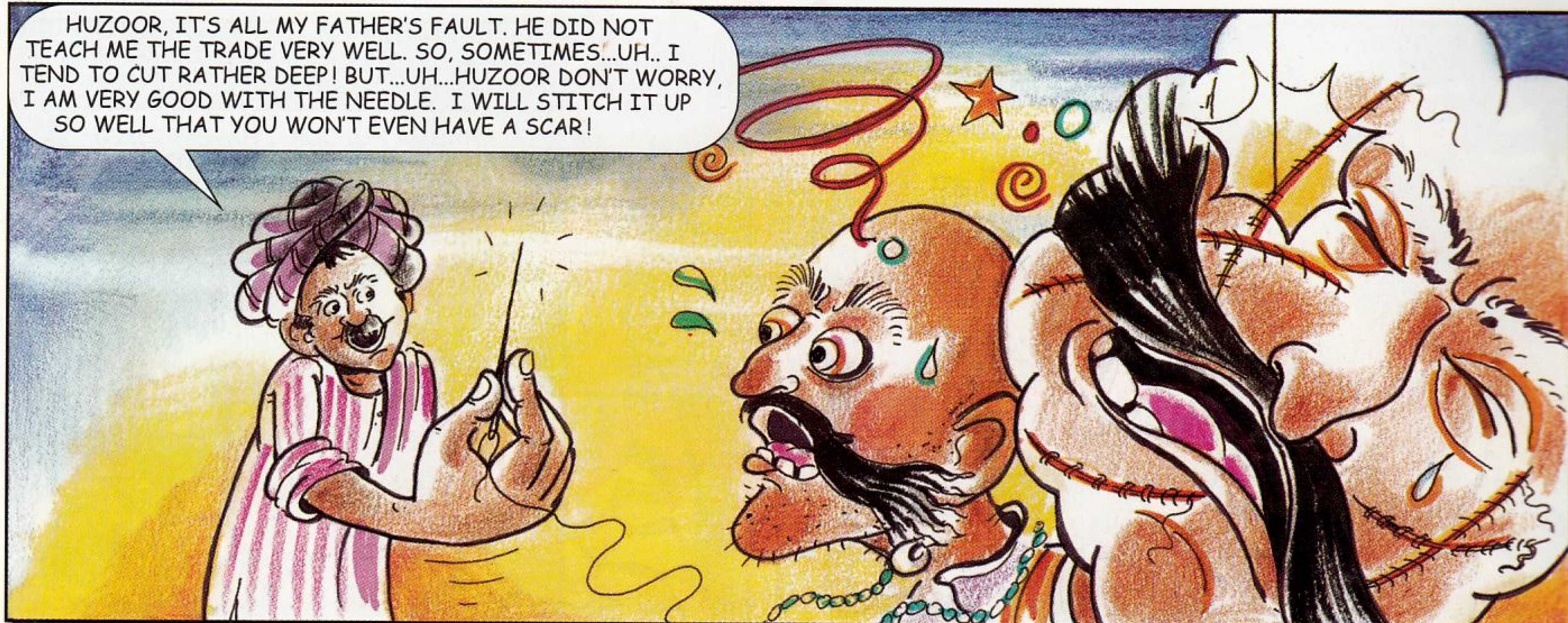


UKLOO, THE BARBER ARRIVED QUITE PROMPTLY. HE HAD A NEEDLE WITH HIM.





HUZOOR, IT'S ALL MY FATHER'S FAULT. HE DID NOT TEACH ME THE TRADE VERY WELL. SO, SOMETIMES...UH.. I TEND TO CUT RATHER DEEP! BUT...UH...HUZOOR DON'T WORRY, I AM VERY GOOD WITH THE NEEDLE. I WILL STITCH IT UP SO WELL THAT YOU WON'T EVEN HAVE A SCAR!



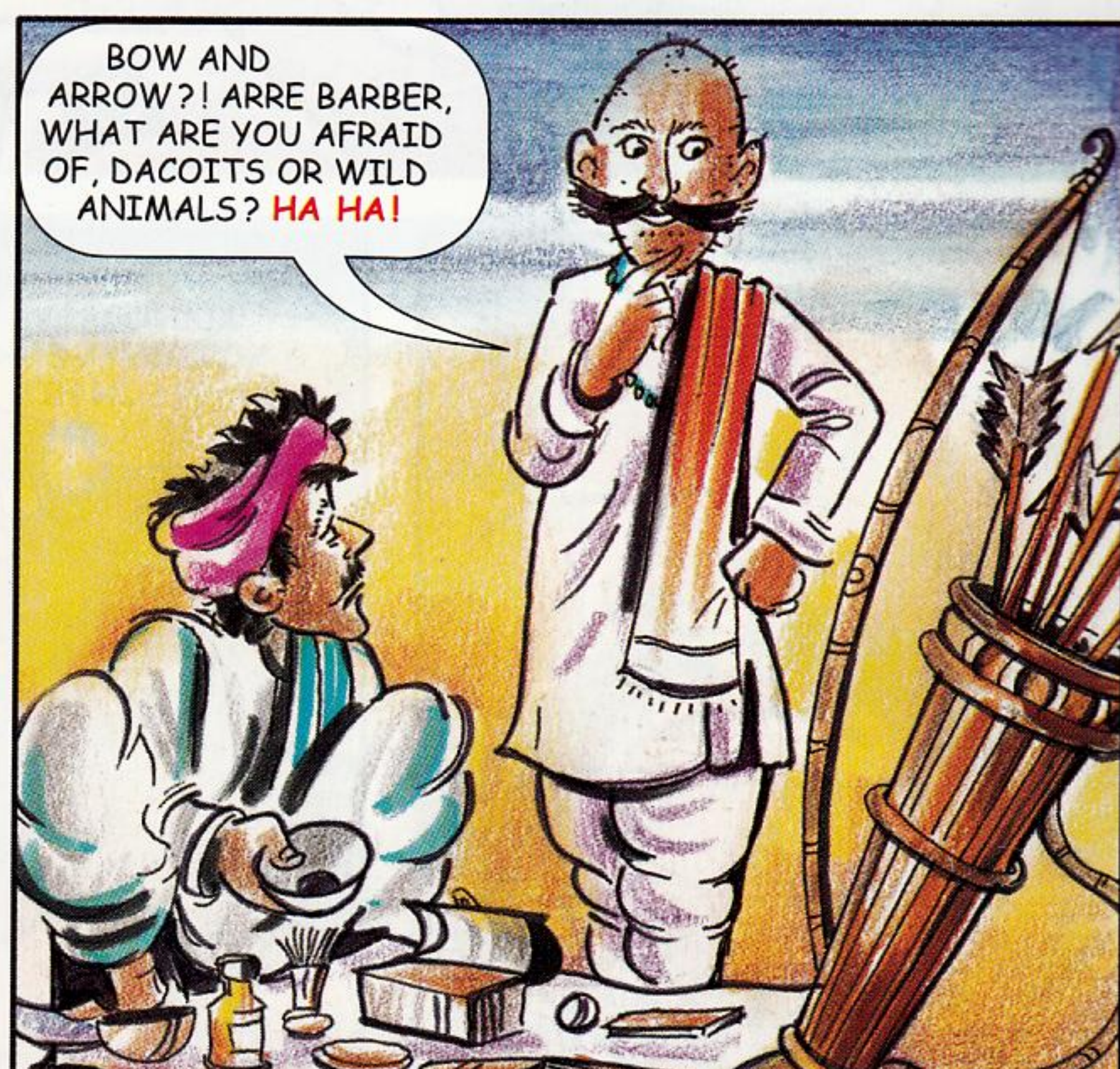
NOW IT WAS PATLOO'S TURN.



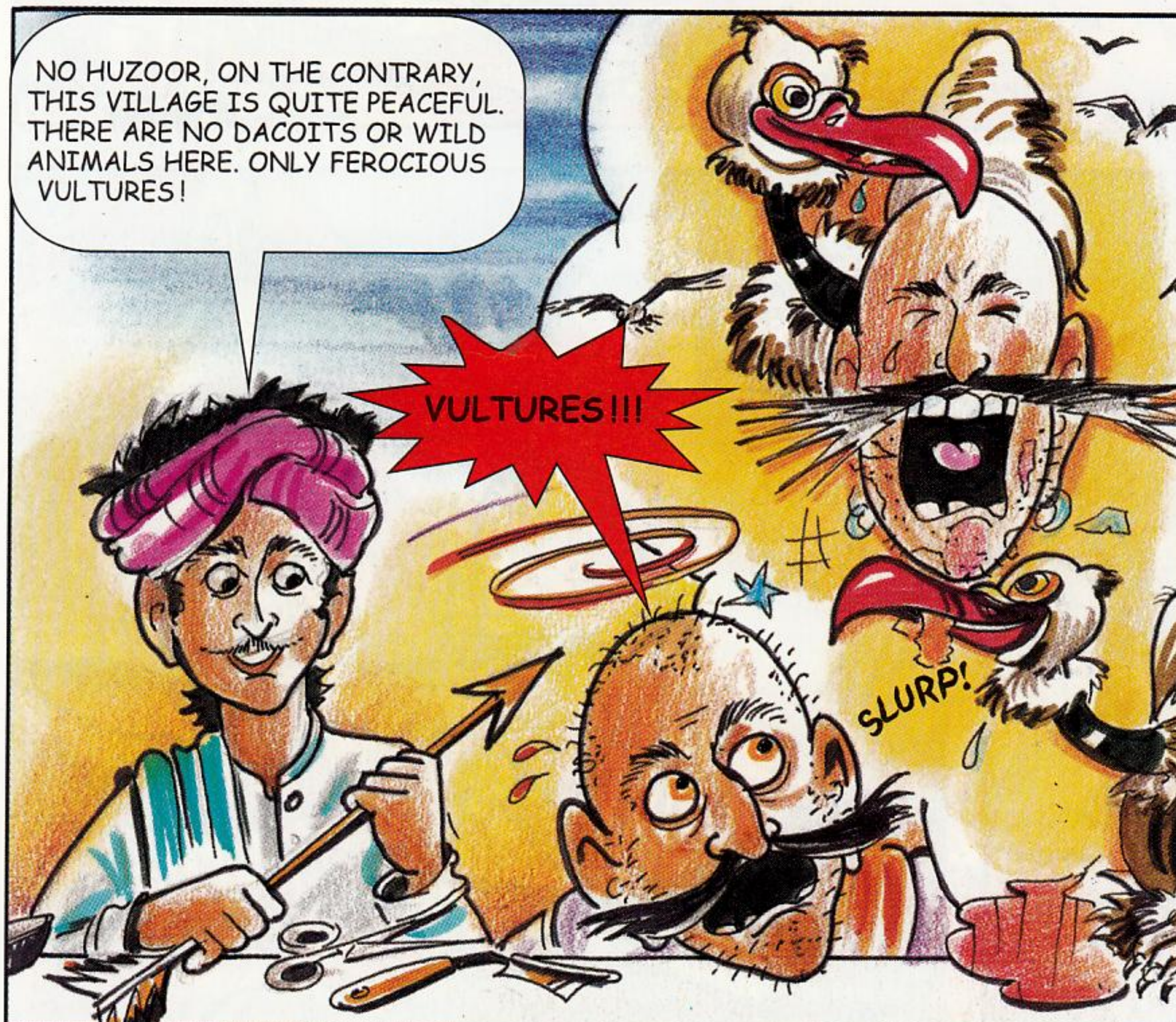
ARE YOU CRAZY? GET LOST BEFORE I BREAK YOUR LEGS! GET ME ANOTHER BARBER! NOW MOVE YOU IDIOTS!



BOW AND ARROW?! ARRE BARBER, WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF, DACOITS OR WILD ANIMALS? HA HA!



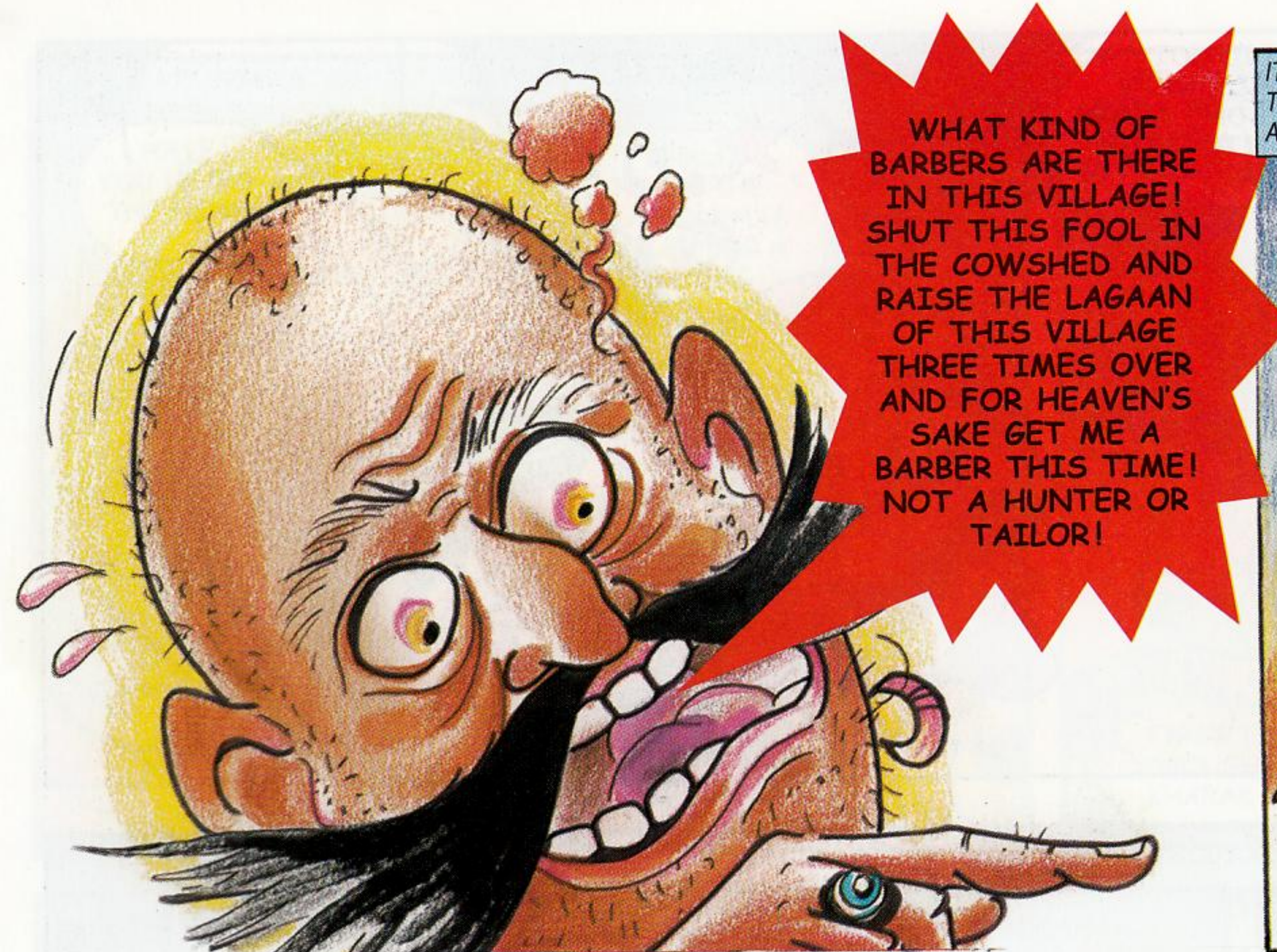
NO HUZOOR, ON THE CONTRARY, THIS VILLAGE IS QUITE PEACEFUL. THERE ARE NO DACOITS OR WILD ANIMALS HERE. ONLY FEROCIOUS VULTURES!



HUZOOR AND THE CROWS TOO! THEY SWOOP DOWN WHENEVER I CAUSE A PARTICULARLY DEEP GASH WHILE SHAVING! ERRR... THE SMELL OF BLOOD YOU SEE. A SLIGHT STUBBLE I AM VERY GOOD AT, BUT WITH AN OVERGROWN BEARD LIKE YOURS... ER... BUT DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE VULTURES, THIS BOW AND ARROW WILL DO THE JOB!



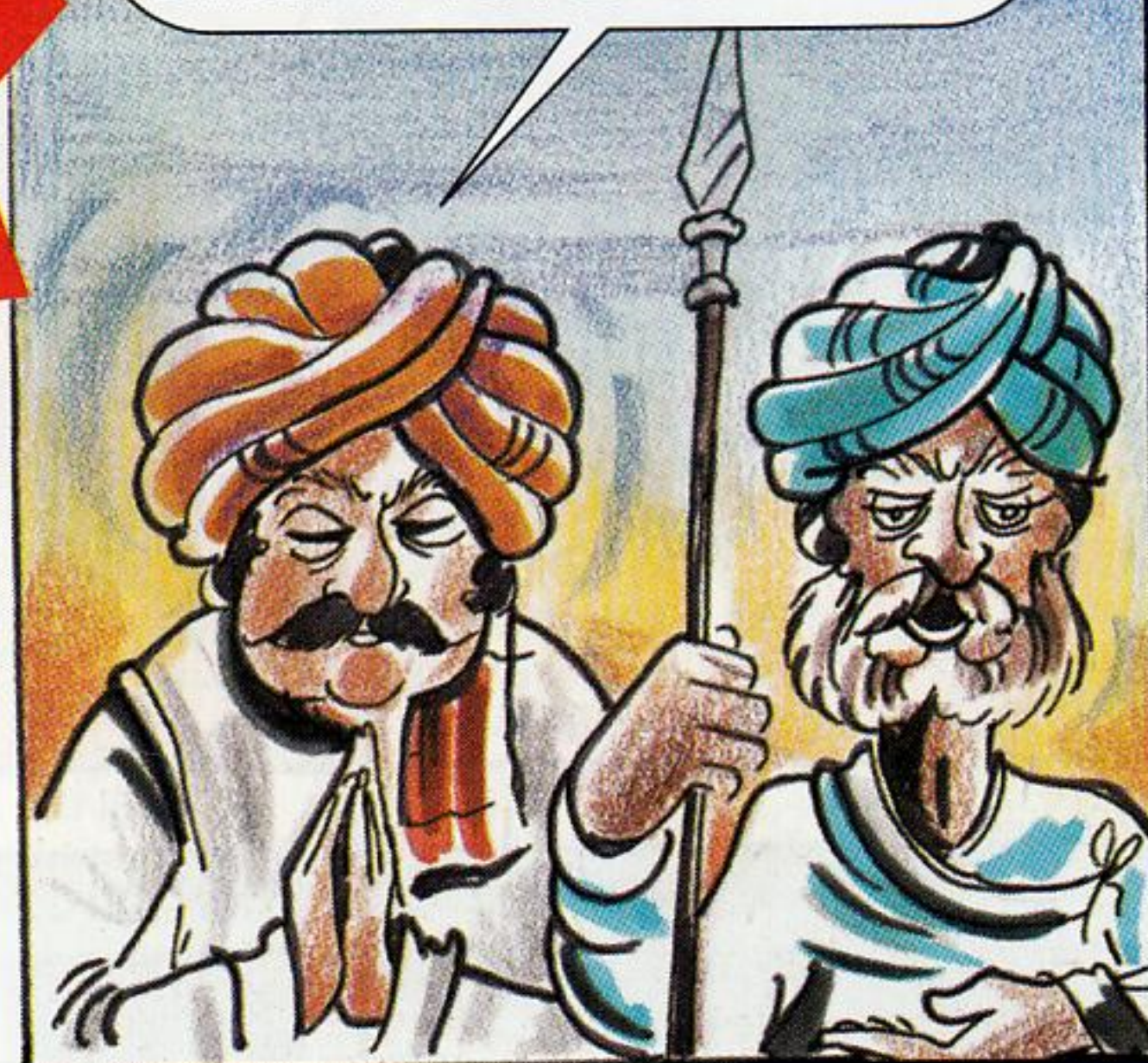




WHAT KIND OF BARBERS ARE THERE IN THIS VILLAGE! SHUT THIS FOOL IN THE COWSHED AND RAISE THE LAGAAN OF THIS VILLAGE THREE TIMES OVER AND FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE GET ME A BARBER THIS TIME! NOT A HUNTER OR TAILOR!

IT WAS ONLY THE NEXT DAY, AFTER A FRANTIC SEARCH THAT KHARAK SINGH'S MEN COULD GET HOLD OF ANOTHER BARBER, CALLED HAKLOO....

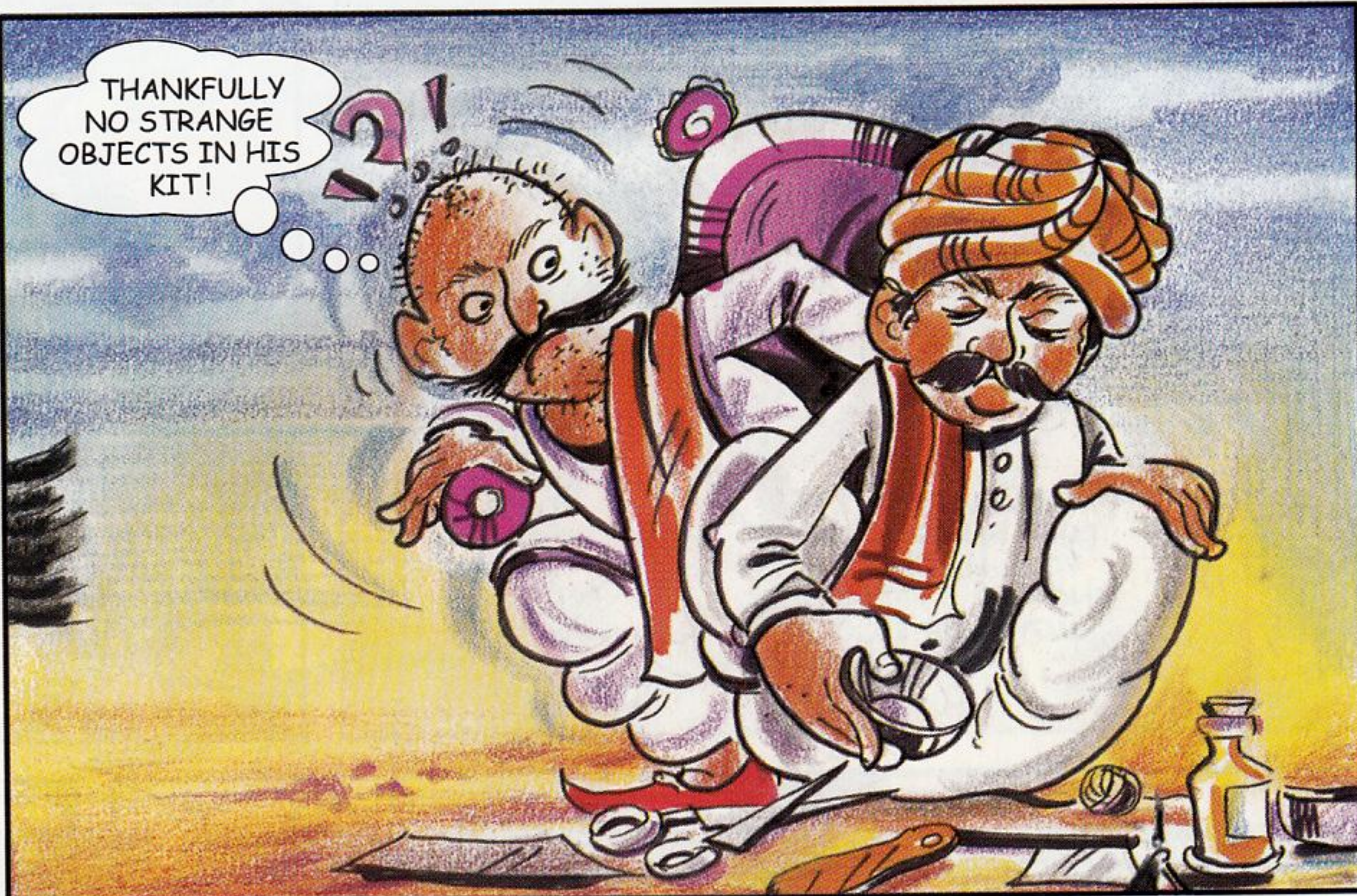
KHAMMA HUZOOR, I HAVE FRISKED THIS BARBER FROM HEAD TO TOE. HE IS NOT CARRYING ANYTHING EXCEPT HIS TOOLS. AND HE IS THE LAST BARBER IN THE VILLAGE!



BY NOW KHARAK SINGH WAS DESPERATE TO GET HIS SHAVE.



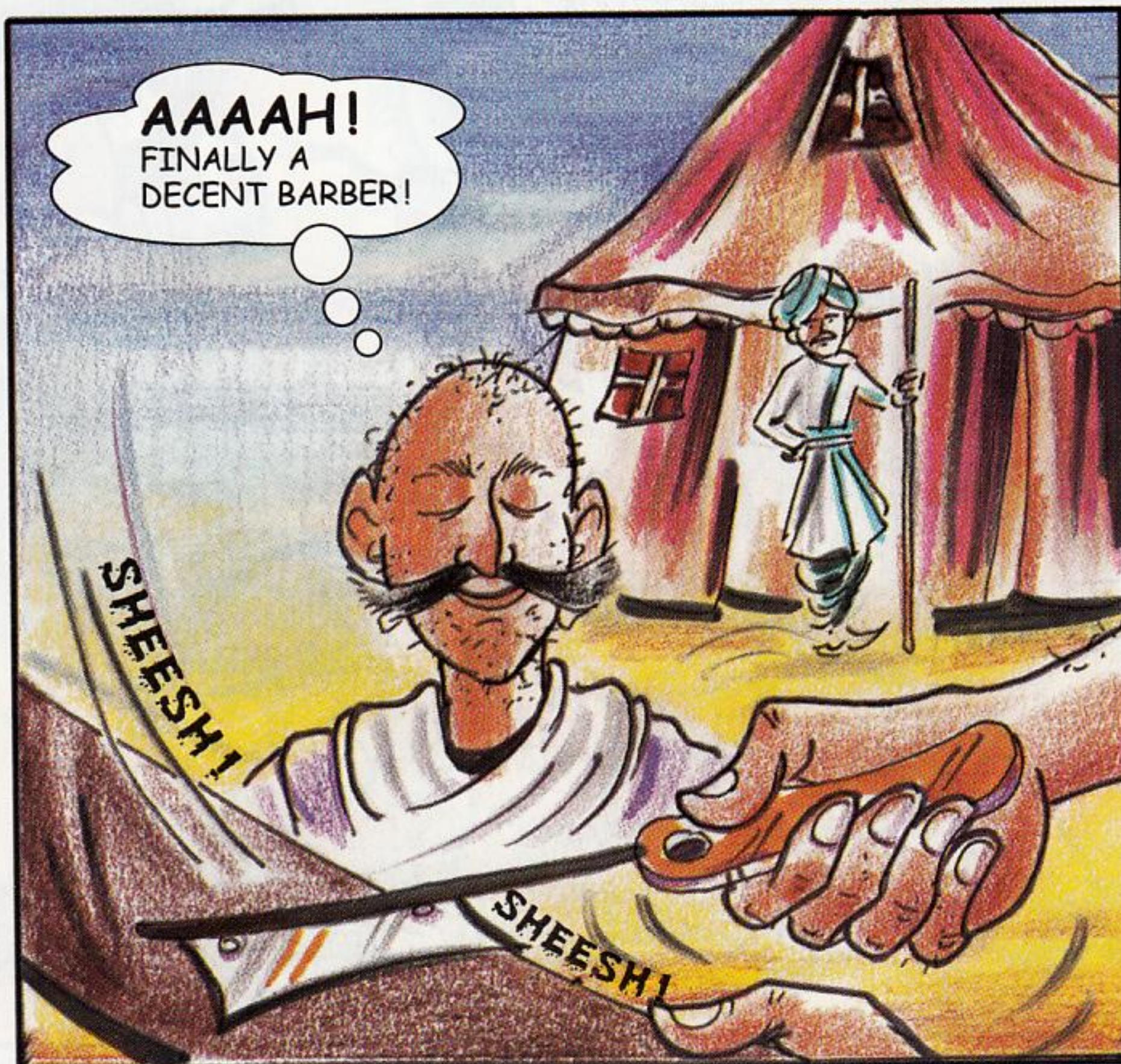
THANKFULLY NO STRANGE OBJECTS IN HIS KIT!



RELAX HUZOOR, I'LL START WITH A MASSAGE.

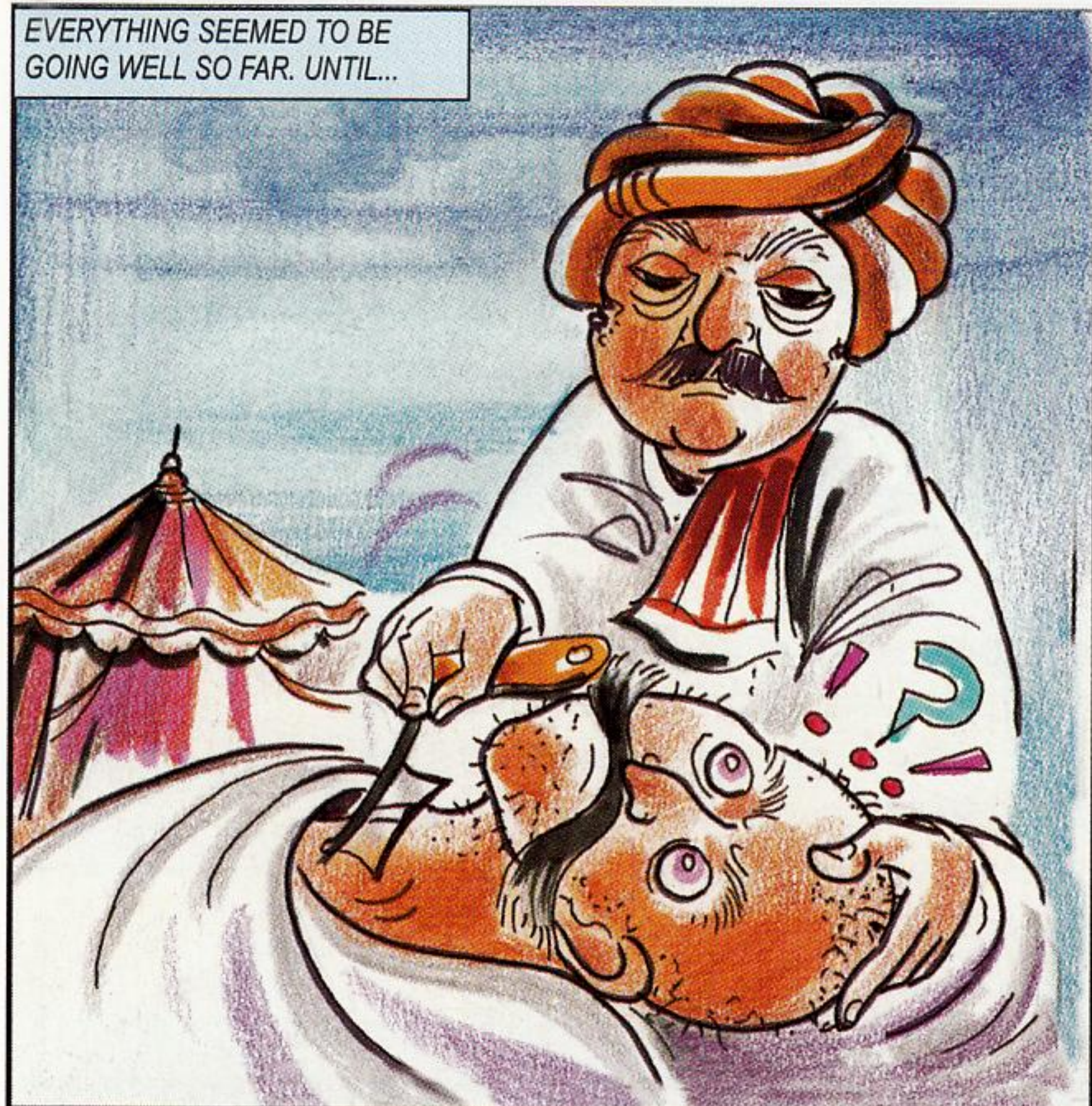


AAAAH! FINALLY A DECENT BARBER!





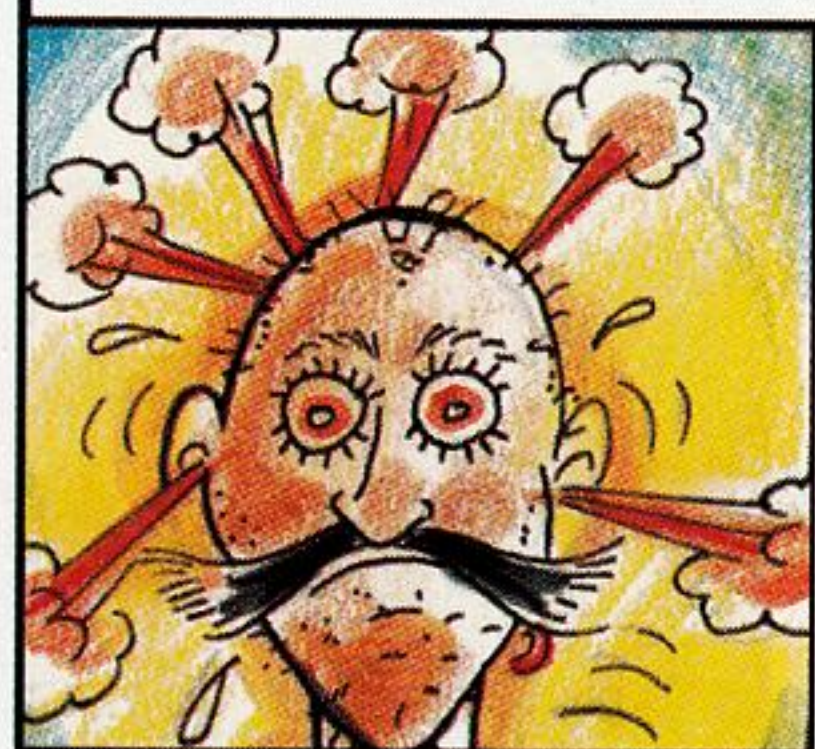
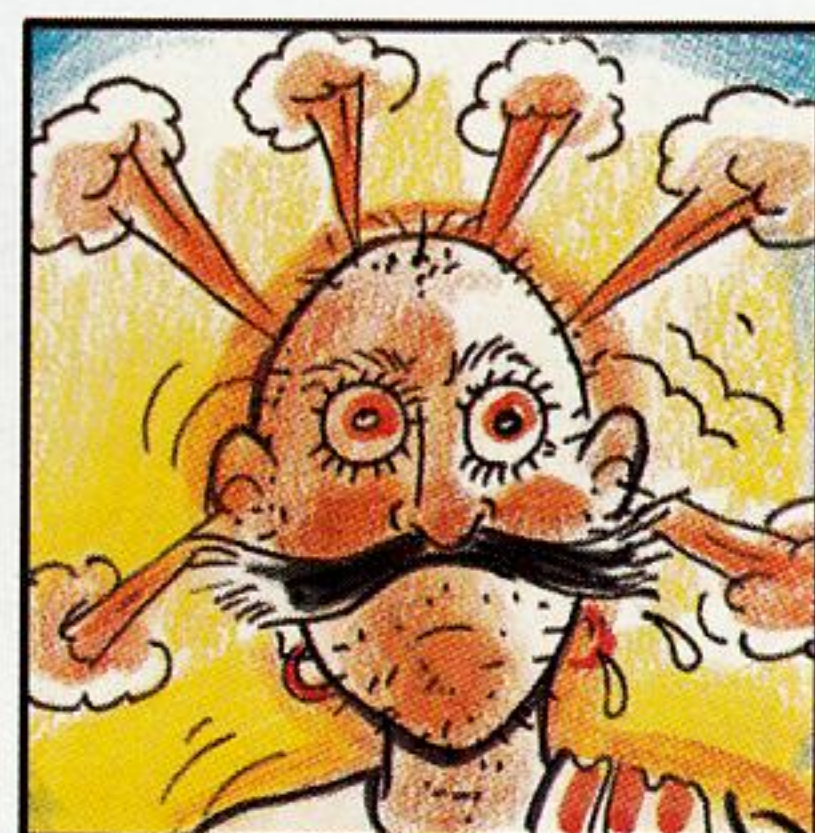
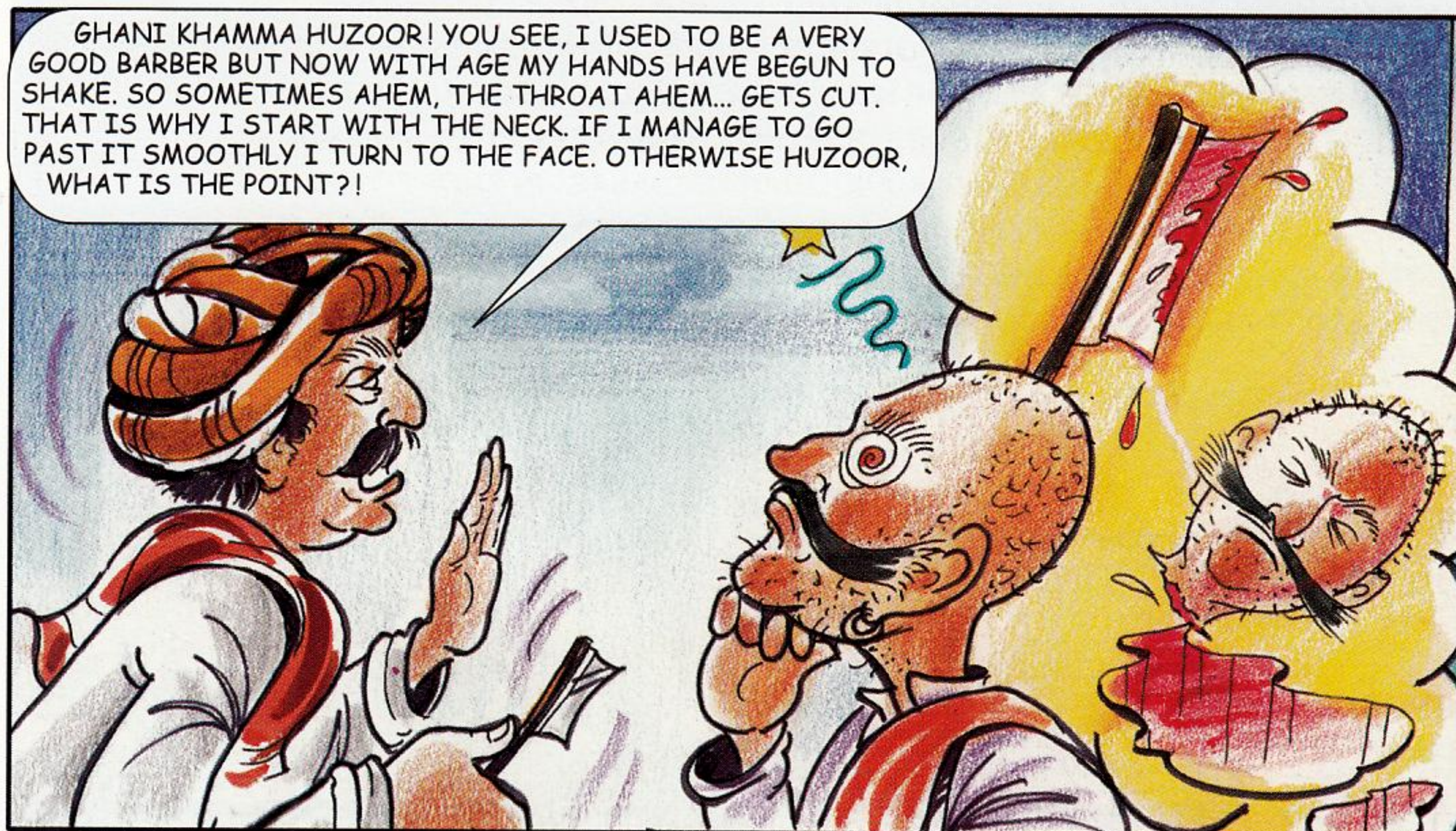
EVERYTHING SEEMED TO BE GOING WELL SO FAR. UNTIL...



HEY, WHY THE HELL ARE YOU SHAVING THE NECK? AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BEGIN WITH THE FACE?!



GHANI KHAMMA HUZOOR! YOU SEE, I USED TO BE A VERY GOOD BARBER BUT NOW WITH AGE MY HANDS HAVE BEGUN TO SHAKE. SO SOMETIMES AHEM, THE THROAT AHEM... GETS CUT. THAT IS WHY I START WITH THE NECK. IF I MANAGE TO GO PAST IT SMOOTHLY I TURN TO THE FACE. OTHERWISE HUZOOR, WHAT IS THE POINT?!



ENOUGH WAS ENOUGH. KHARAK SINGH WAS THANKFUL TO BE STILL ALIVE.

PACK UP AND MOVE FROM THIS CURSED VILLAGE! QUICK!

✖☆☆☆☆✖



HE SAYS THE RANA HAS SENT FOR HIM!

LONG LIVE THE BARBERS!

UKLOO PATLOO AND HAKLOO ZINDABAD!



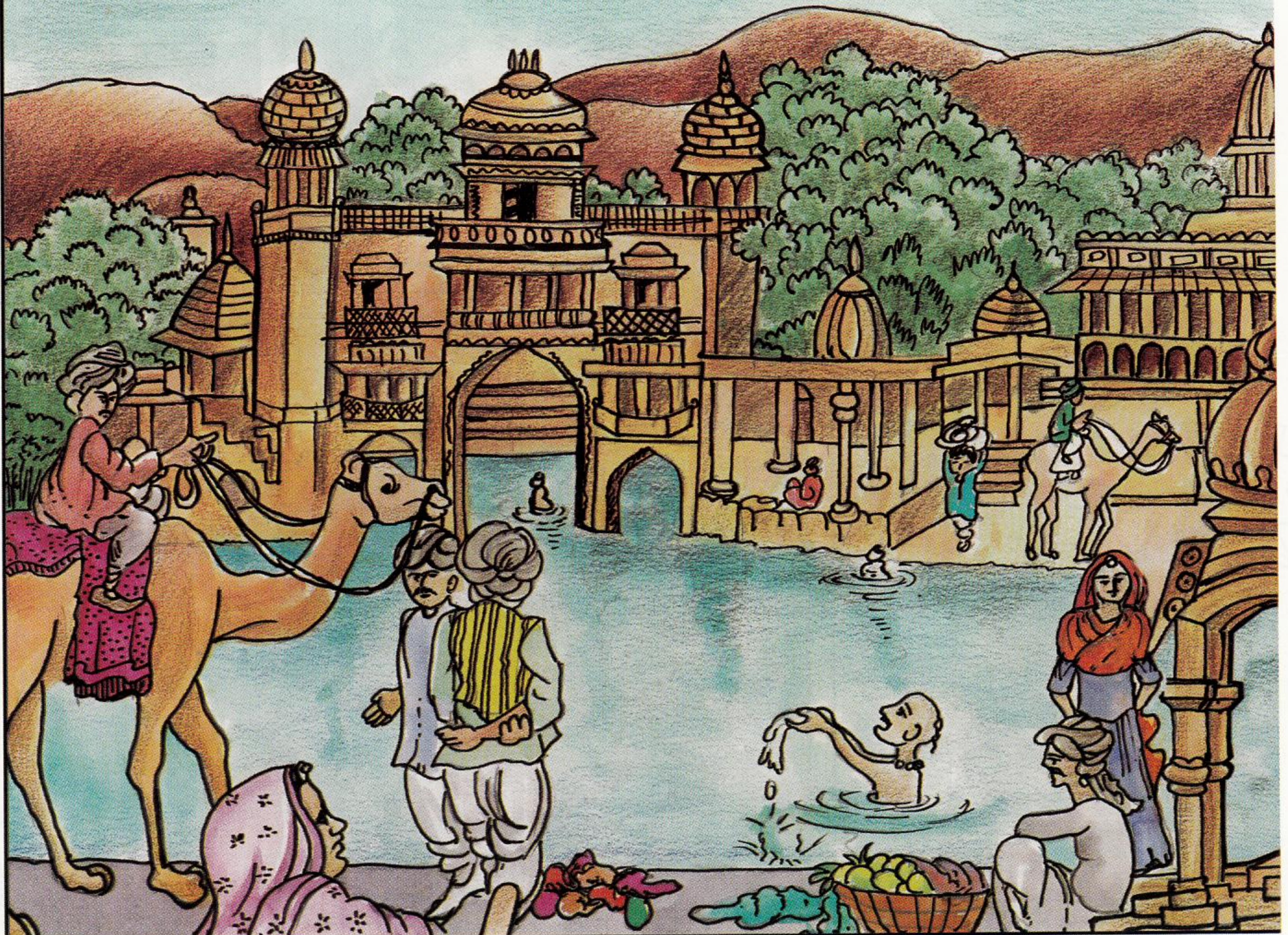
THE END



# Teelari's Gateway

**I**N MADH PRADESH, ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF JAISALMER THERE IS A VERY FAMOUS LAKE CALLED GADHISAR LAKE<sup>1</sup>. LOCATED ON THE ANCIENT TRADE ROUTE BETWEEN THE NORTH WEST AND SOUTH ASIA, IT WAS A STRATEGIC RESTING POINT FOR MERCHANTS, SADHUS, FAKIRS, MULLAHS AND WANDERING MINSTRELS. IT SERVED AS AN IMPORTANT WATER RESERVOIR. THIS LAKE WAS SO IMPORTANT THAT IT WAS CONSIDERED AN ACT OF MERIT TO BUILD CHATRIS, TEMPLES, SARAI<sup>2</sup> AND DHARAMSHALAS<sup>3</sup> AROUND IT.

BEING ON AN IMPORTANT TRADE ROUTE, MANY COURTESANS LIVED IN JAISALMER. THEY WERE KNOWN AS 'PATHRIYAS' AND MADE A LIVING FROM SINGING AND DANCING LOCALLY AND IN THE PROVINCES OF HYDERABAD, SINDH AND KARACHI. THEY WERE PATRONISED BY ROYAL HOUSEHOLDS AND RICH MERCHANTS PASSING THROUGH THE AREA. ALTHOUGH THESE WOMEN SERVED TO AMUSE MEN AND AMASSED A LOT OF WEALTH, THEY HAD NO SOCIAL STATUS. HOWEVER THEY WERE QUITE INCLINED TOWARDS SOCIAL WELFARE. THEY BUILT SEVERAL WATER SOURCES, SUCH AS PONDS, STEPWELLS AND DHARAMSHALAS. IN SHORT, THEY CONTRIBUTED GENEROUSLY TO THE WELFARE OF THOSE WHO LOOKED DOWN UPON THEM. SOME SAY THAT THEIR GENEROUS ACTS WERE BORN OUT OF THEIR DESIRE FOR PENANCE! THIS STORY IS ABOUT ONE SUCH WOMAN WHO TURNED OUT RATHER UNUSUAL....



1. A water reservoir in Jaisalmer. 2. A resting place for travellers. 3. Charitable boarding houses.

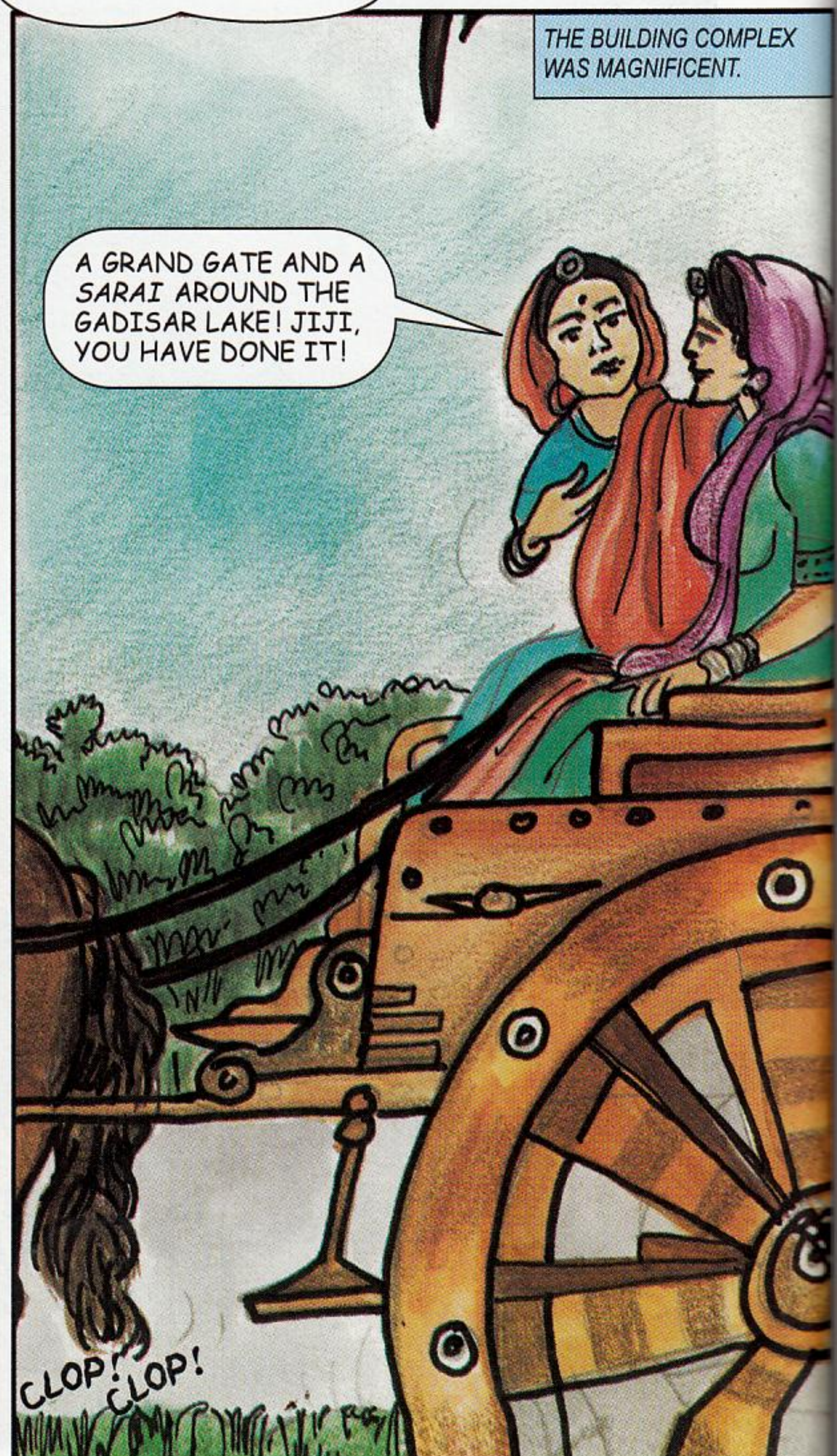
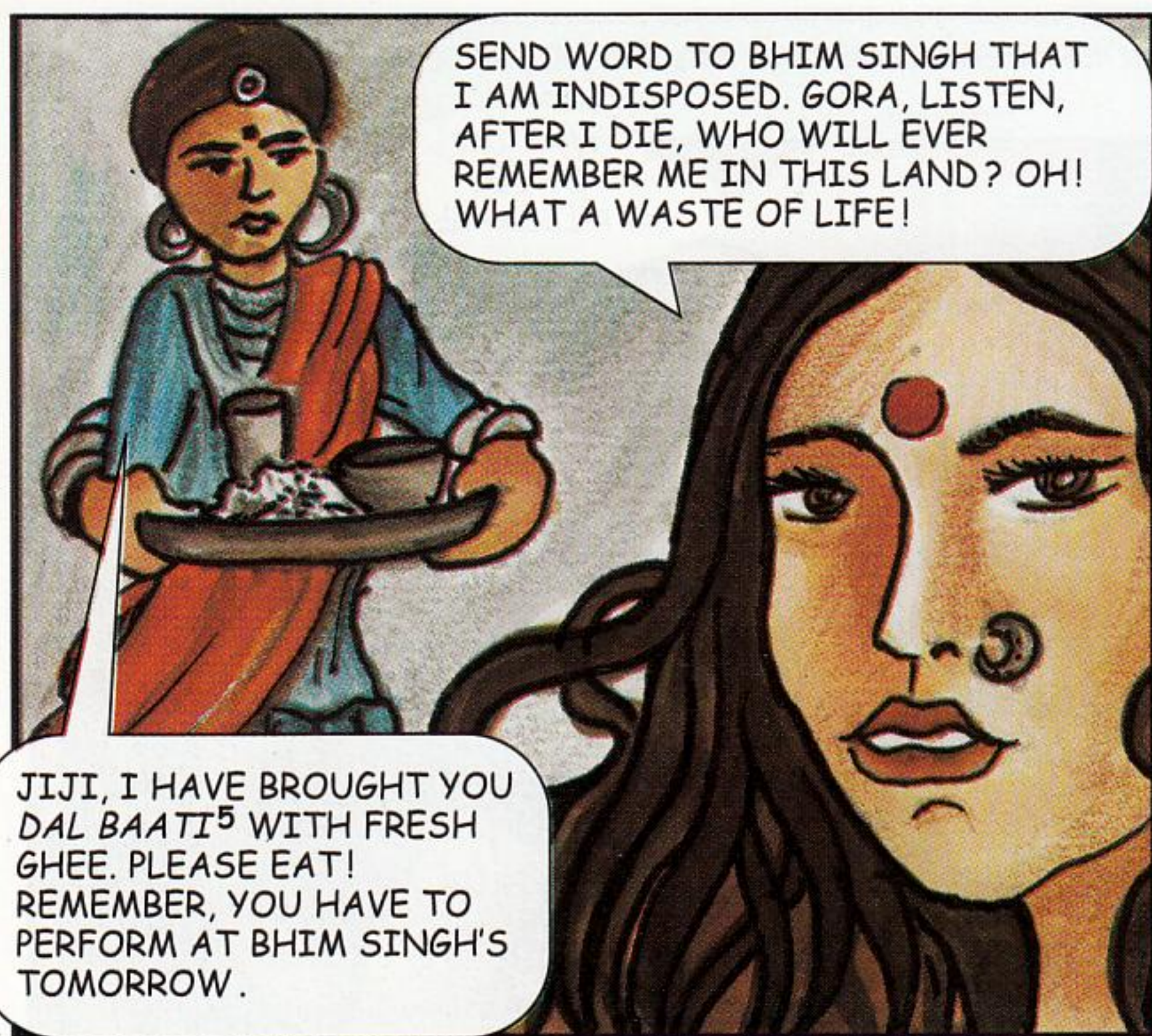


TEELAN, A COURTESAN, FAMOUS FAR AND WIDE FOR HER SINGING AND DANCING, WAS RESTING IN HER INNER CHAMBERS...IT WAS TWO DAYS SINCE SHE HAD COME OUT OF HER ROOM. IN FACT, SHE GAVE STRICT INSTRUCTIONS THAT SHE SHOULD NOT BE DISTURBED.



4. A doctor who practices traditional medicine.







AND AS THE SONG GOES...

For Teelan's gate and mansion  
Under which pass men and women  
How demeaning for the king's procession  
To pass under Teelan's gate and mansion!



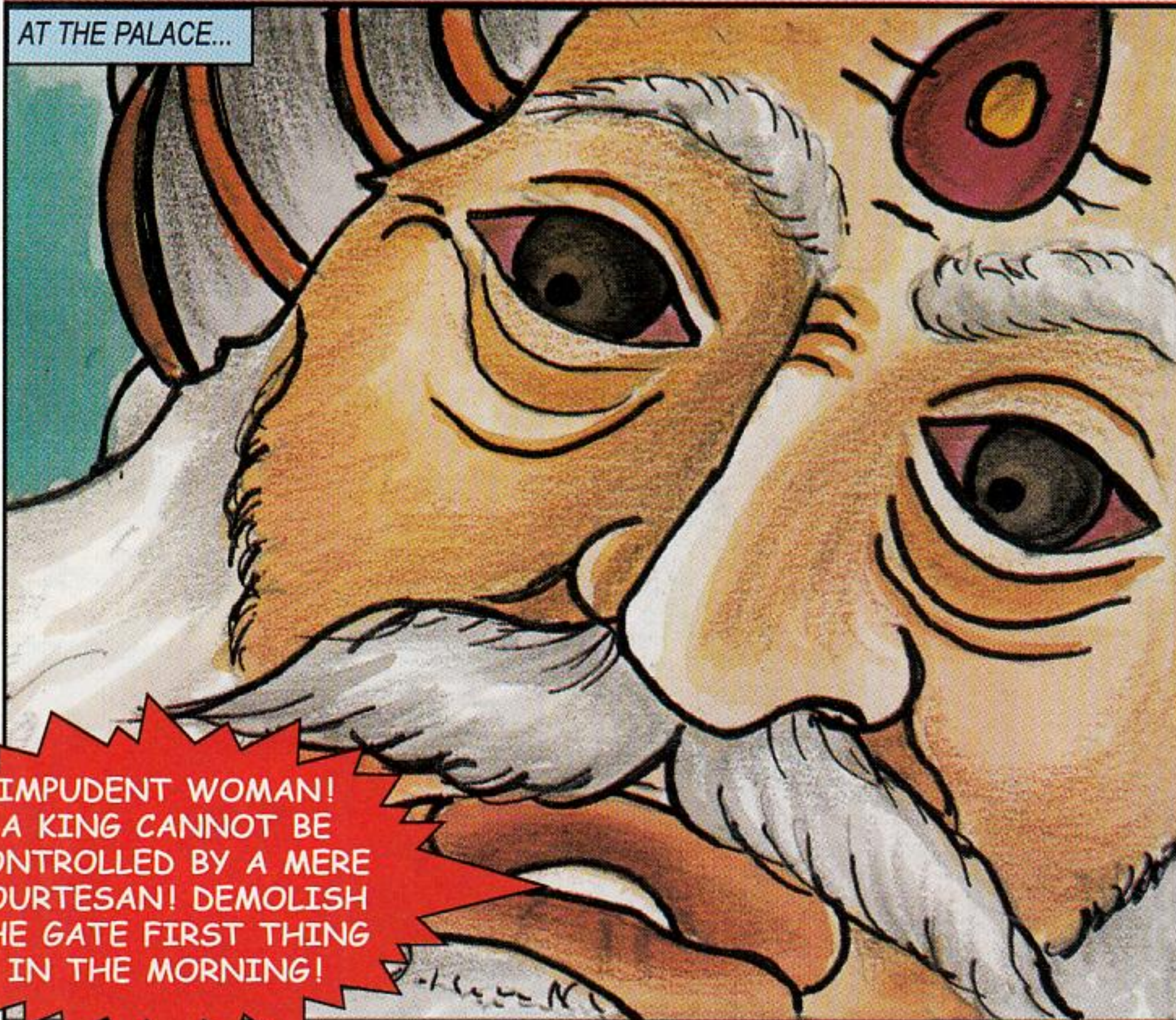
HOW CAN THE  
MAHARAVAL PASS  
UNDER A GATE THAT  
HAS BEEN BUILT BY  
A PATHRIYA!

THIS  
WOMAN  
MUST BE  
TAUGHT A  
LESSON!

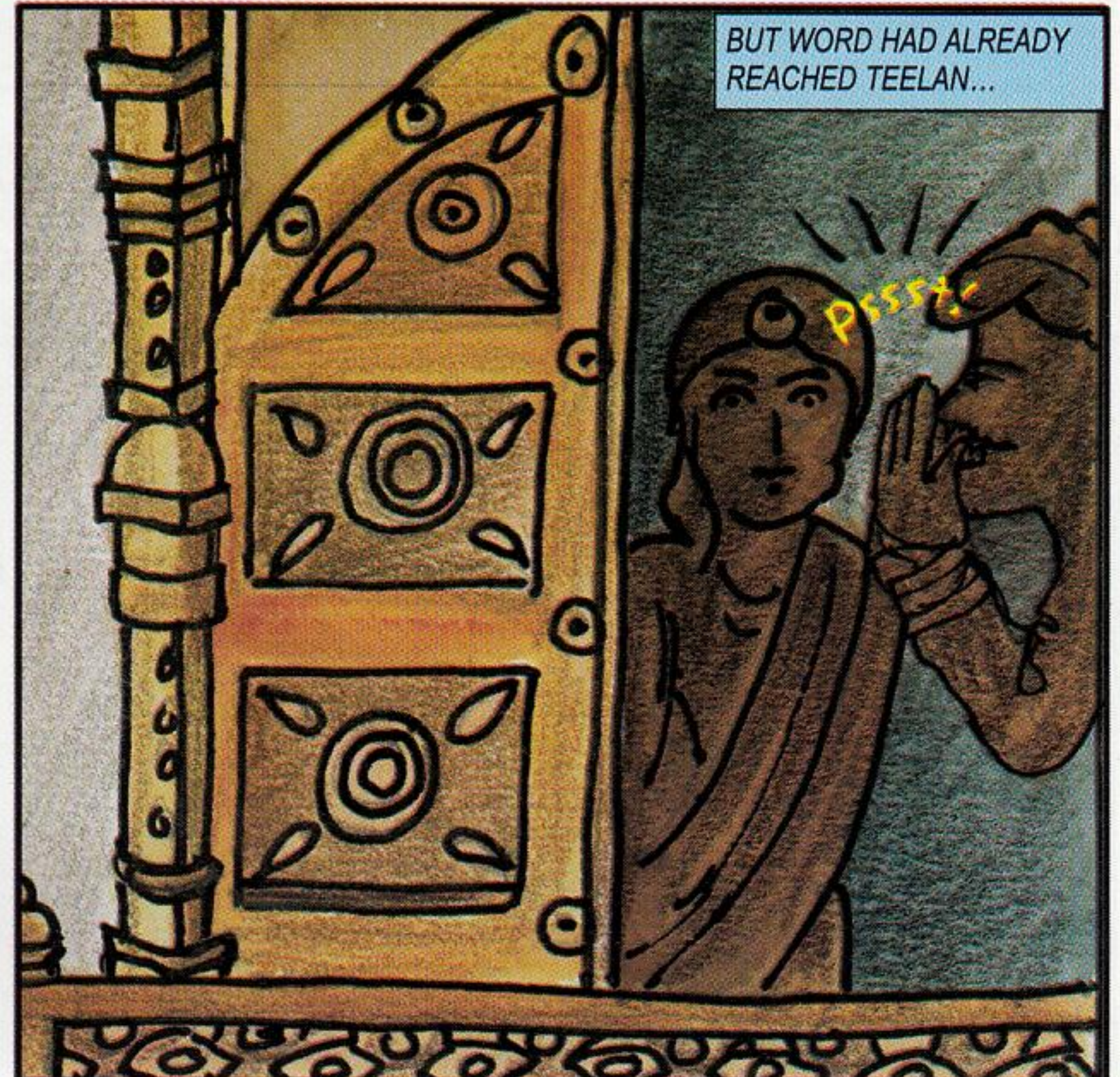
LET'S TELL THE  
MAHARAVAL

AT THE PALACE...

IMPUDENT WOMAN!  
A KING CANNOT BE  
CONTROLLED BY A MERE  
COURTESAN! DEMOLISH  
THE GATE FIRST THING  
IN THE MORNING!

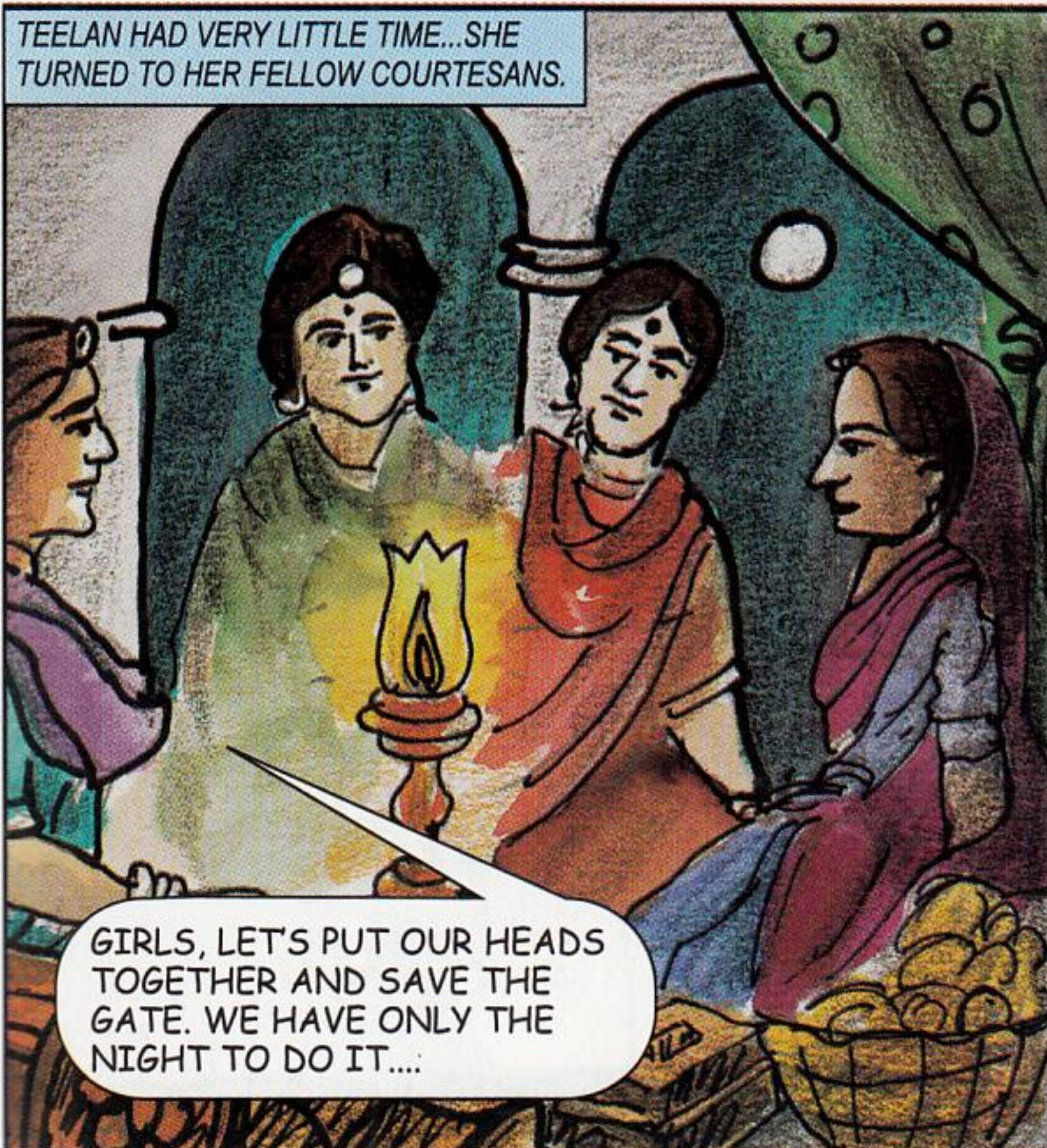


BUT WORD HAD ALREADY  
REACHED TEELAN...

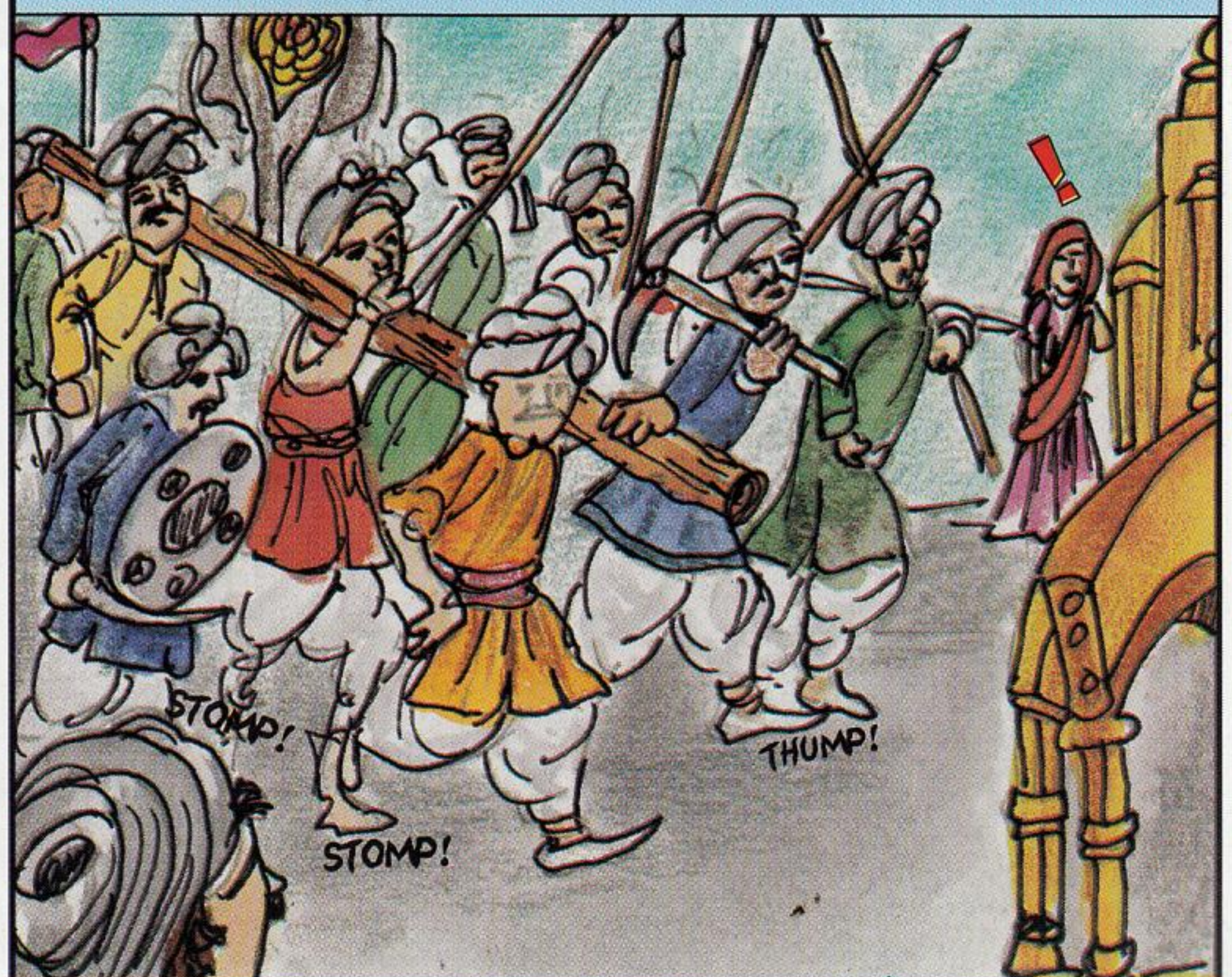


TEELAN HAD VERY LITTLE TIME...SHE  
TURNED TO HER FELLOW COURTESANS.

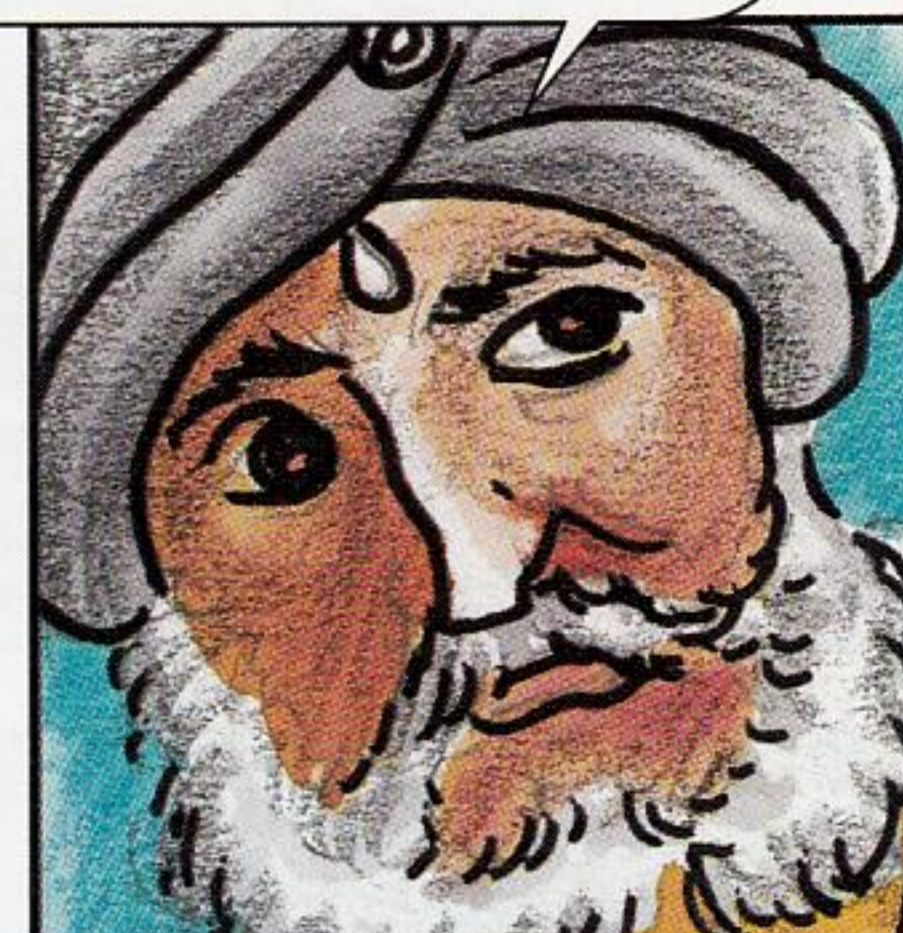
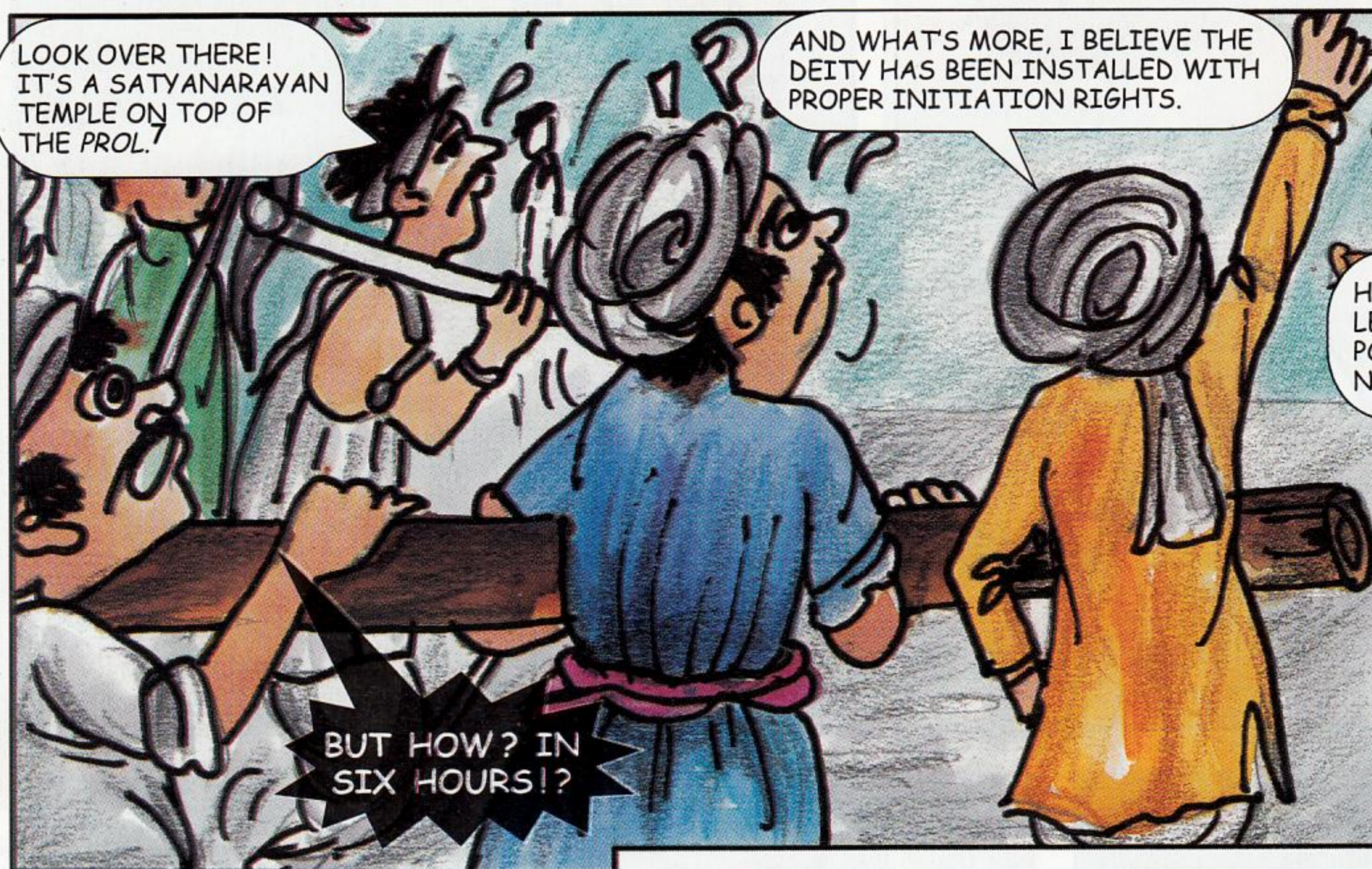
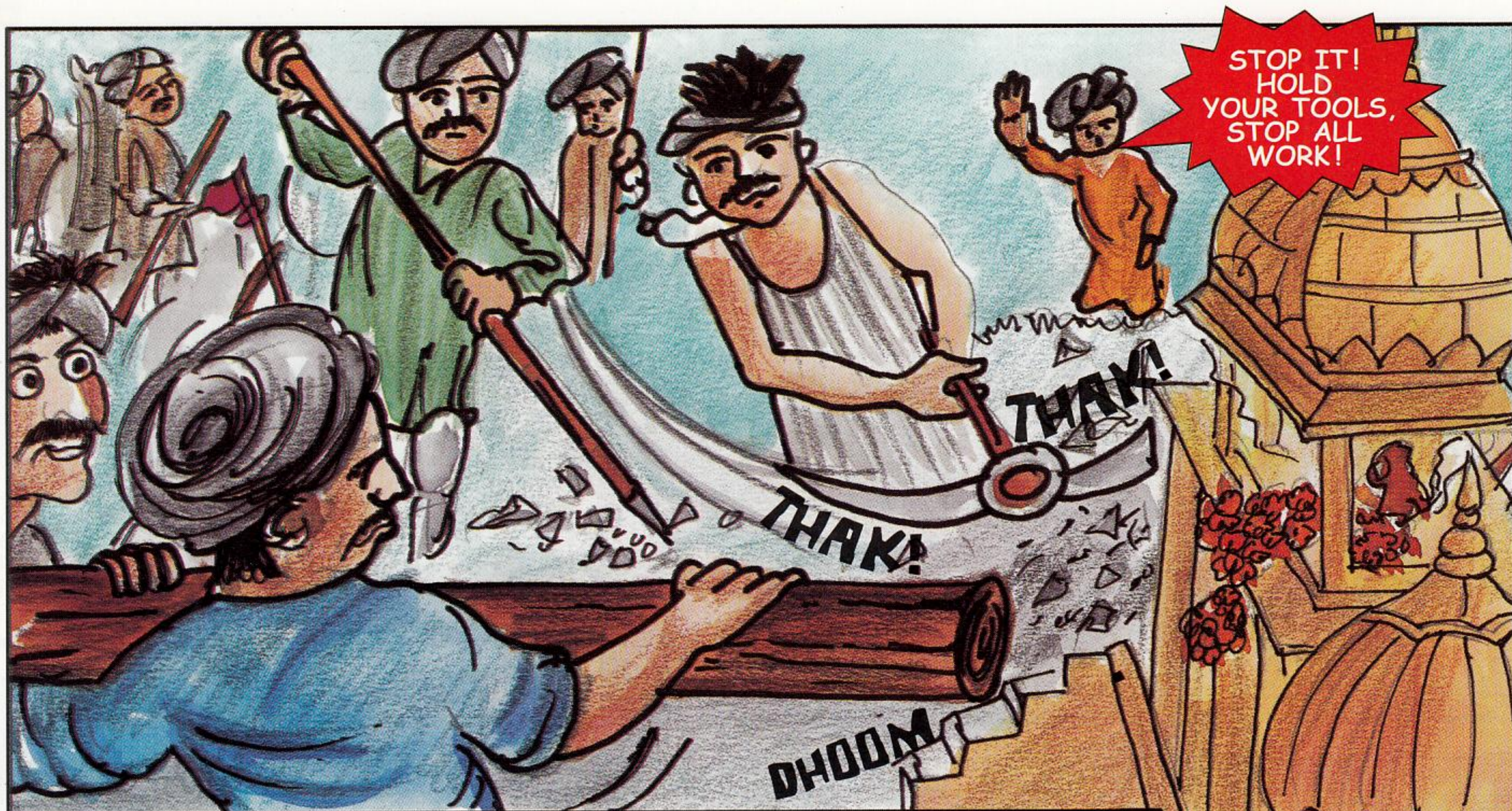
GIRLS, LET'S PUT OUR HEADS  
TOGETHER AND SAVE THE  
GATE. WE HAVE ONLY THE  
NIGHT TO DO IT....



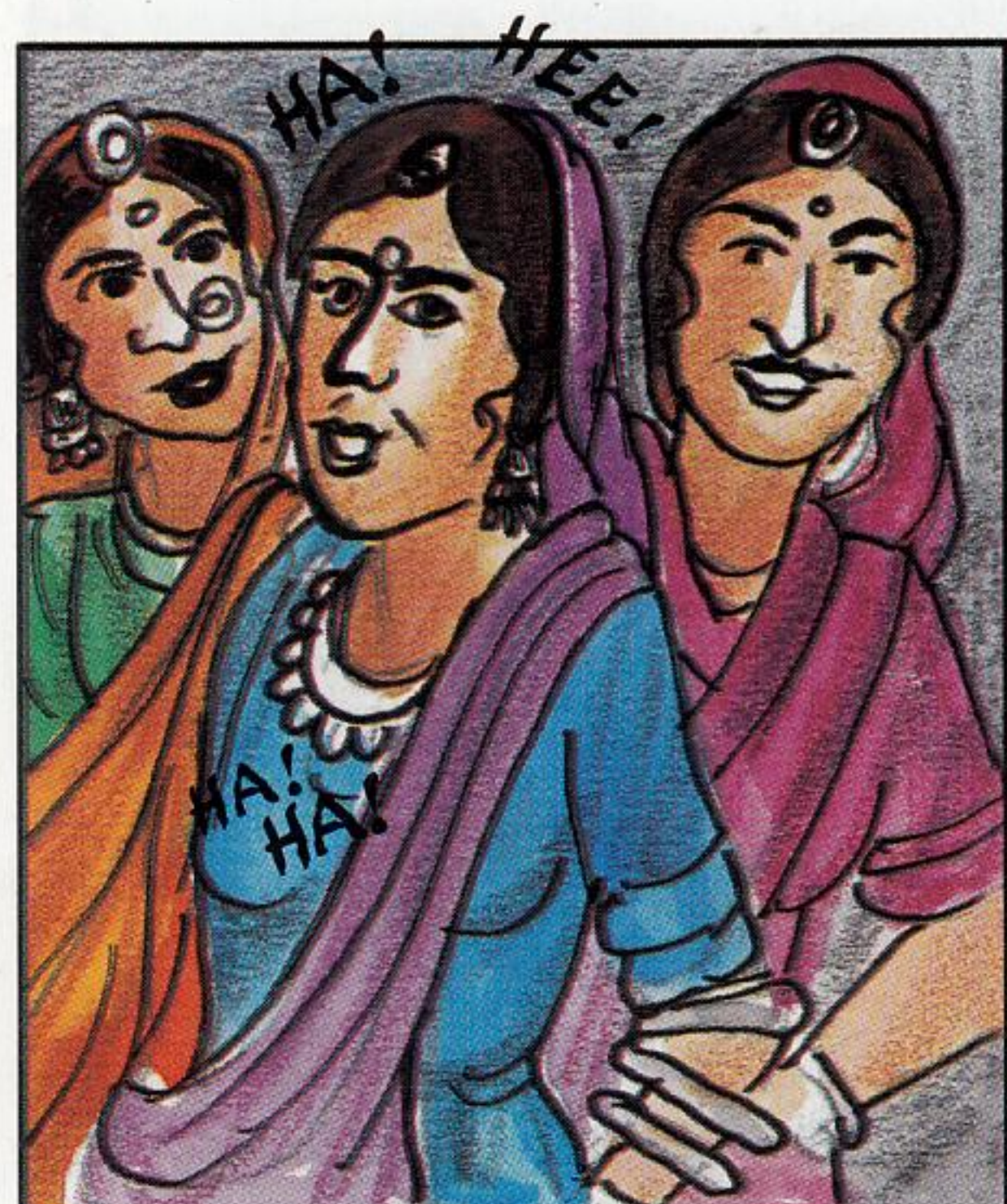
NEXT MORNING AT SUNRISE, THE MAHARAVAL'S DEMOLITION SQUAD ARRIVED AS EXPECTED...



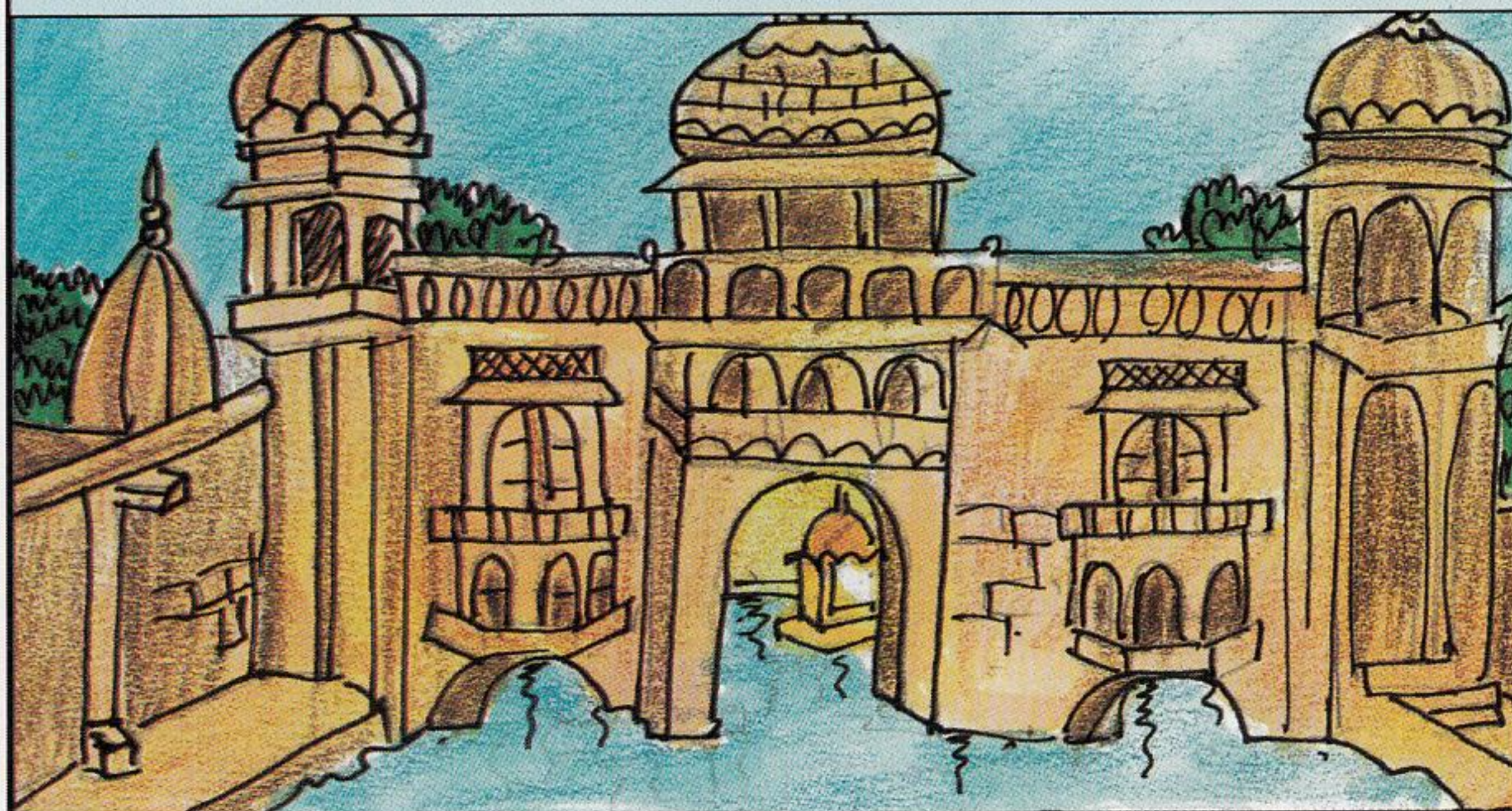




HMMM. I SEE WHAT'S HAPPENED. LEAVE IT AS IT IS. I CANNOT POSSIBLY DEMOLISH THE GATE NOW THAT IT'S A TEMPLE!



THE GATE NEVER DID GET DEMOLISHED. BUT THE STORY GOES THAT TILL THE END OF THIS DYNASTIC RULE, THE ROYALTY NEVER WENT UNDER THIS GATEWAY. THE GATEWAY STILL STANDS IN JAISALMER, POPULARLY KNOWN AS 'TEELON KI PROL'.





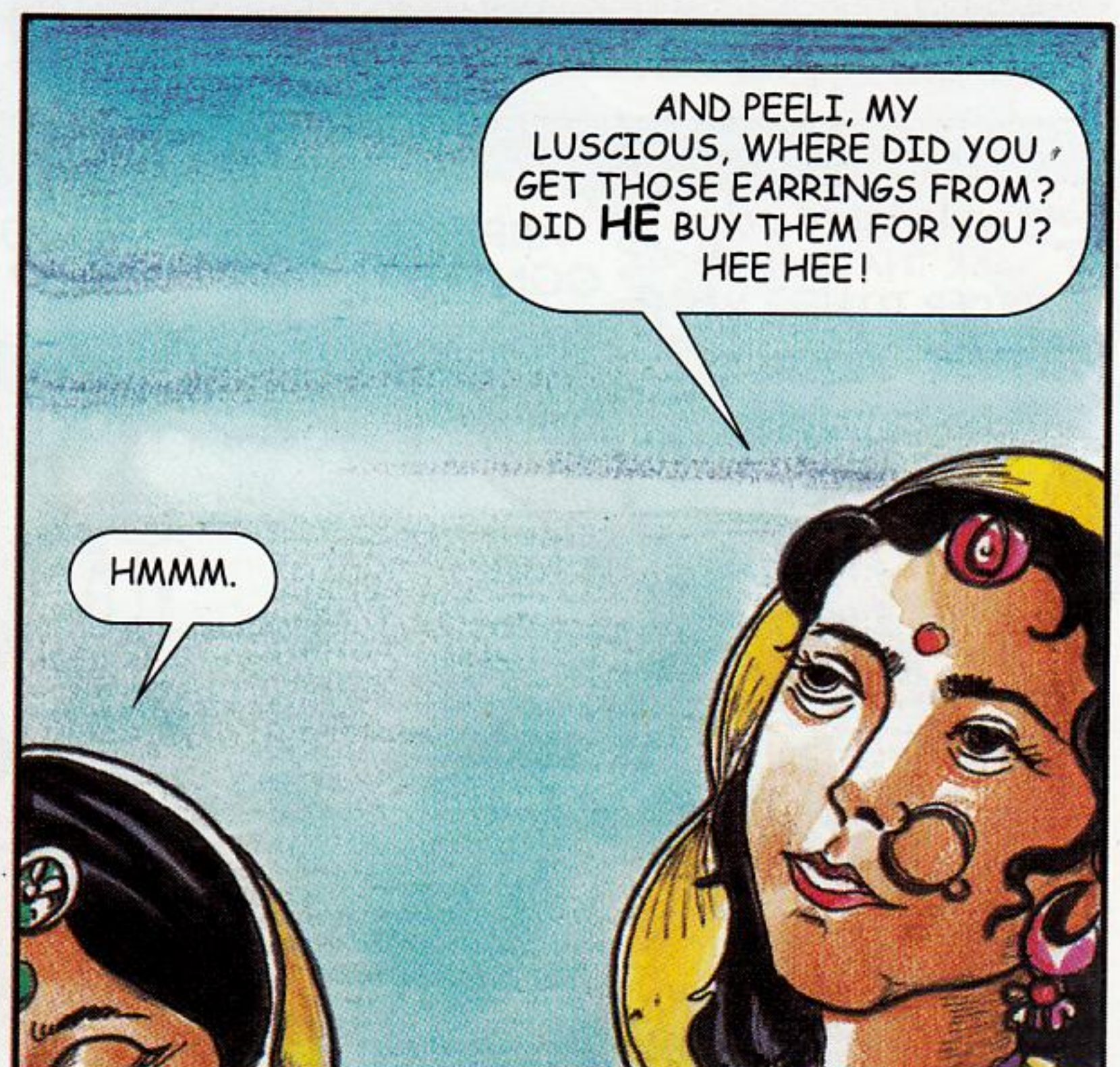
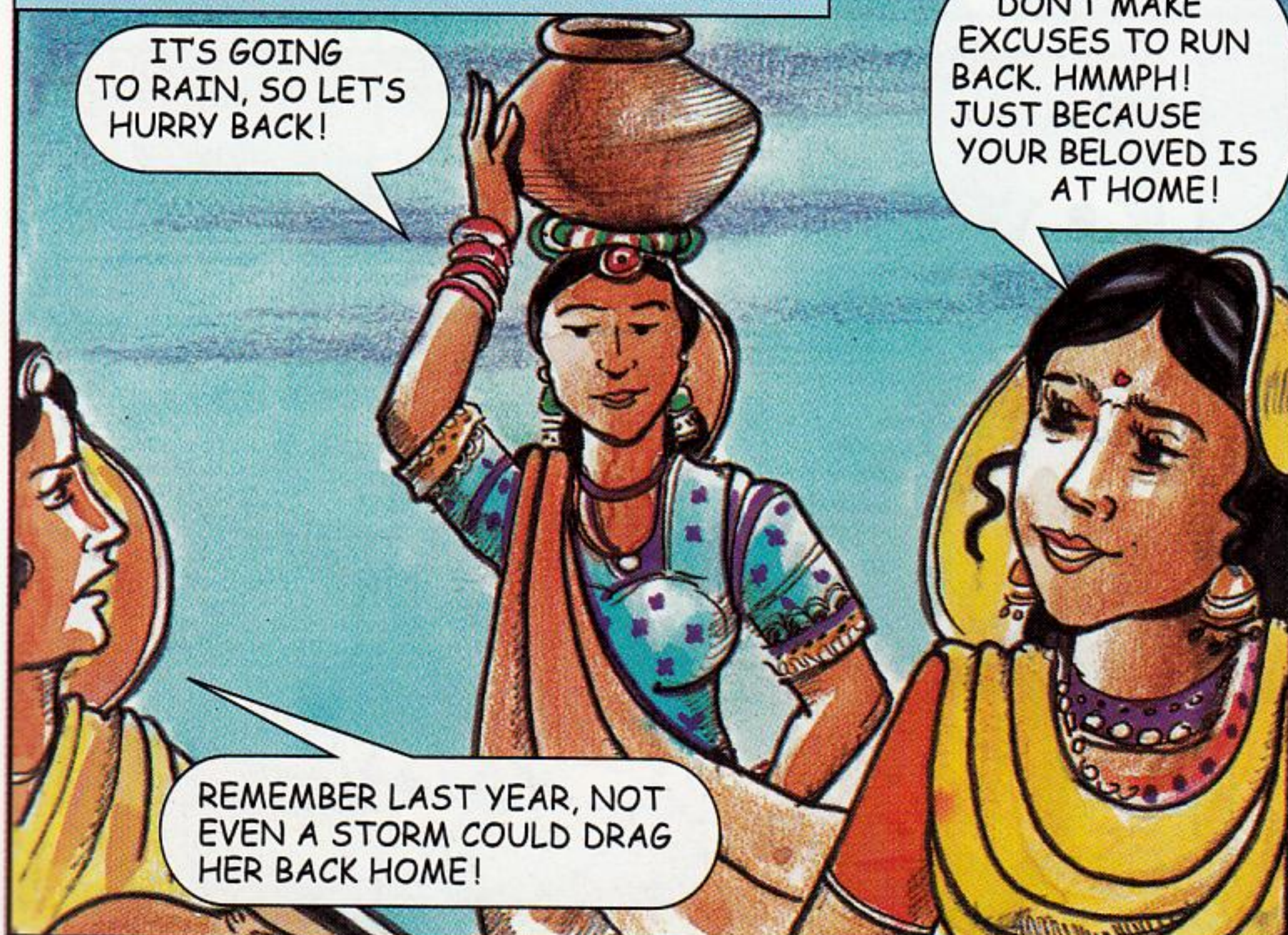
# Panihari

THIS STORY IS BASED ON A VERY POPULAR FOLK SONG CALLED 'PANIHARI' SUNG BY WOMEN DURING THE MONSOONS. IT IS A TRAGIC TALE WHERE THE SONG HIGHLIGHTS THE LONELINESS OF A WOMAN OF THE DESERT WHOSE BELOVED HAS LEFT FOR FAR OFF LANDS IN SEARCH OF WORK.

IT WAS THE MONTH OF SAVAN<sup>1</sup>. THE CLOUDS WERE DARK AND THE RAINS MADE THE SAROVAR<sup>2</sup> BRIM WITH WATER. IT WAS TIME FOR BANTER AND LAUGHTER FOR THE PANIHARANS<sup>3</sup>..



THE GIRLS WERE HAPPY THAT THEIR MEN WERE AT HOME.



1 The month of Savan (fifth month of the Hindu calander) in the middle of July, marks the beginning of the monsoon in Rajasthan.  
2 Water tanks or ponds. 3 Women carrying water from the village well or pond.



BUT ONE GIRL WALKED ALONE, LOST IN HER THOUGHTS. THE SURGE OF MONSOON EXCITEMENT ONLY MADE HER MORE DEPRESSED.



WHAT DOES HE LOOK LIKE I WONDER. IS HE TALL, HANDSOME, KIND? TO BE MARRIED AT THE AGE OF SIX IS BAD ENOUGH, BUT NEVER SEEING ONE'S HUSBAND'S FACE IS WORSE! BETTER TO BE A WIDOW THAN TO WAIT FOR A MAN ONE HAS NEVER SEEN.



MY POOR HEART... IT WEEPS...HMM...HUM...HMM...HUM...



SUDDENLY...

GOODNESS, IT'S LATE! I'D BETTER FILL THE POT AND HEAD BACK HOME. PHEW! IT'S HEAVY!



OOF! I WISH THE OTHERS WERE AROUND TO GIVE ME A HAND WITH THE POT!

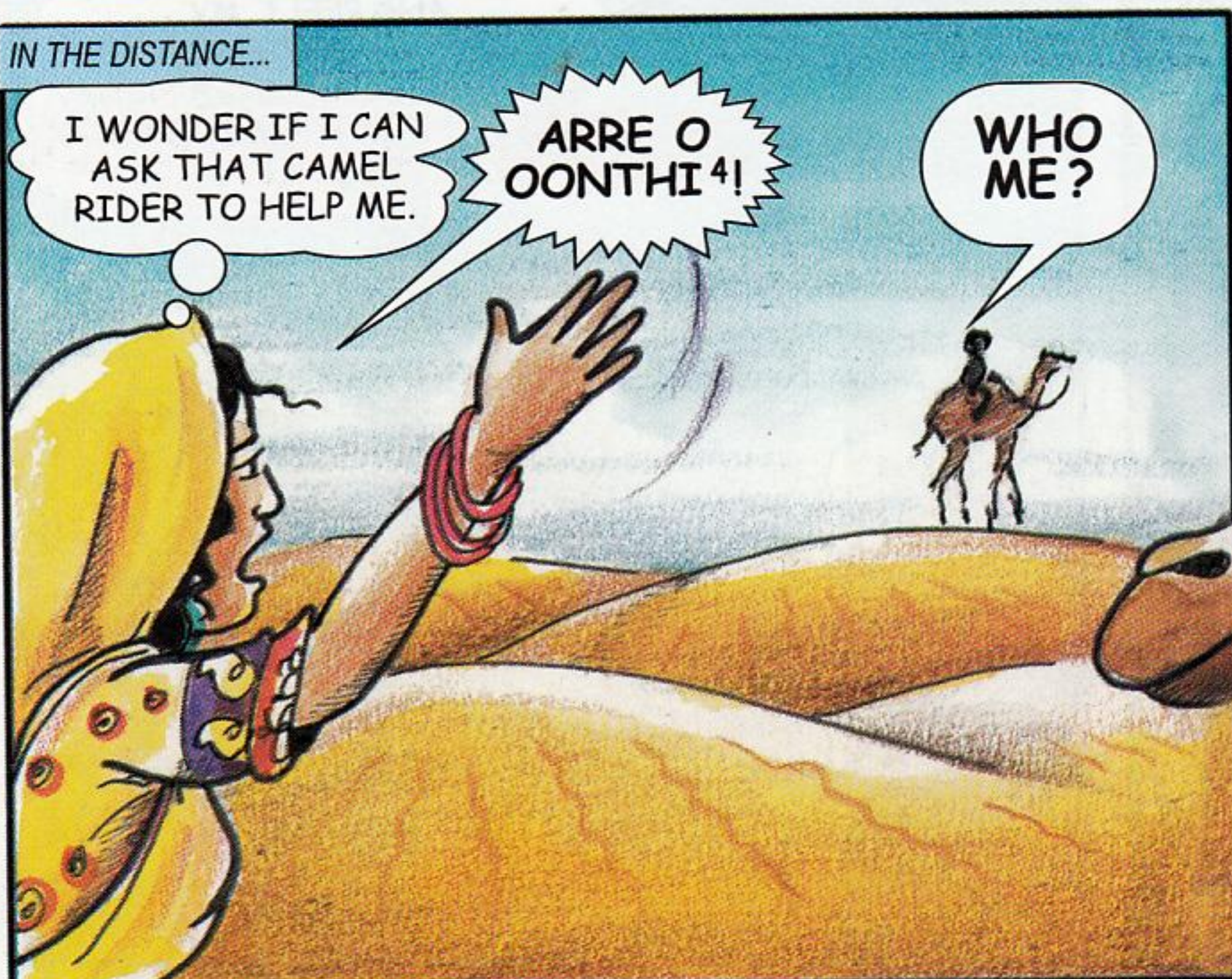


IN THE DISTANCE...

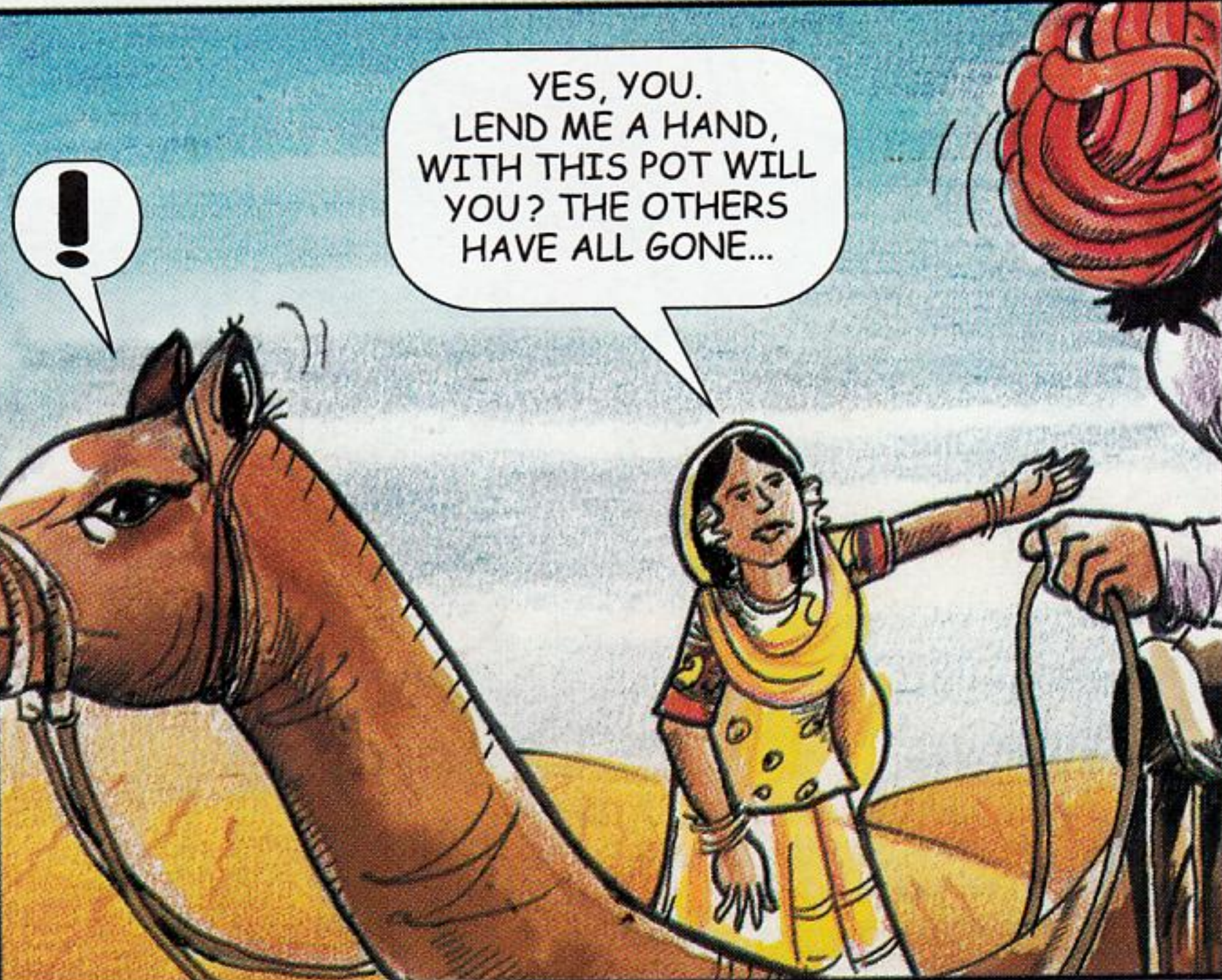
I WONDER IF I CAN ASK THAT CAMEL RIDER TO HELP ME.

ARRE O OONTHI 4!

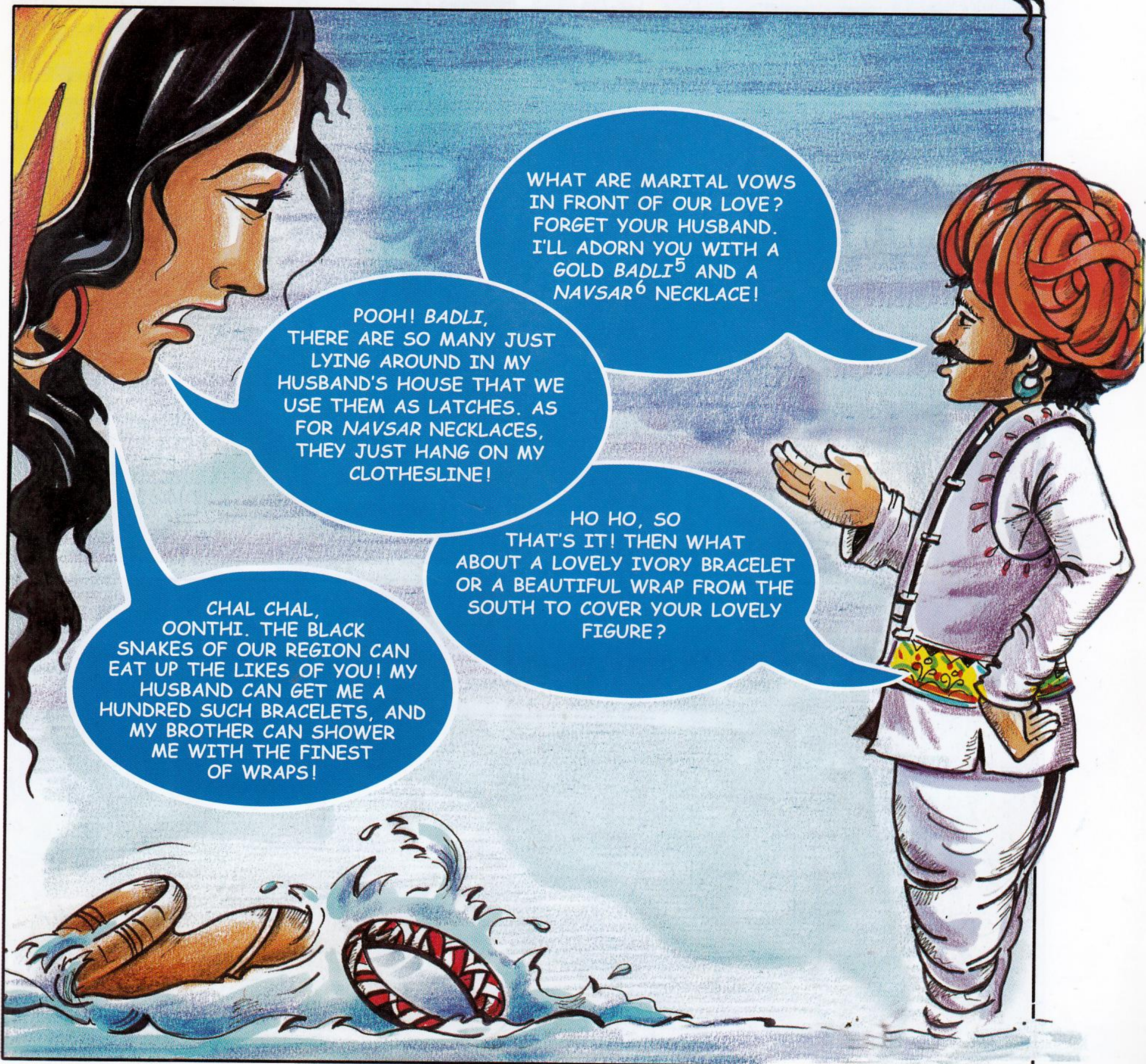
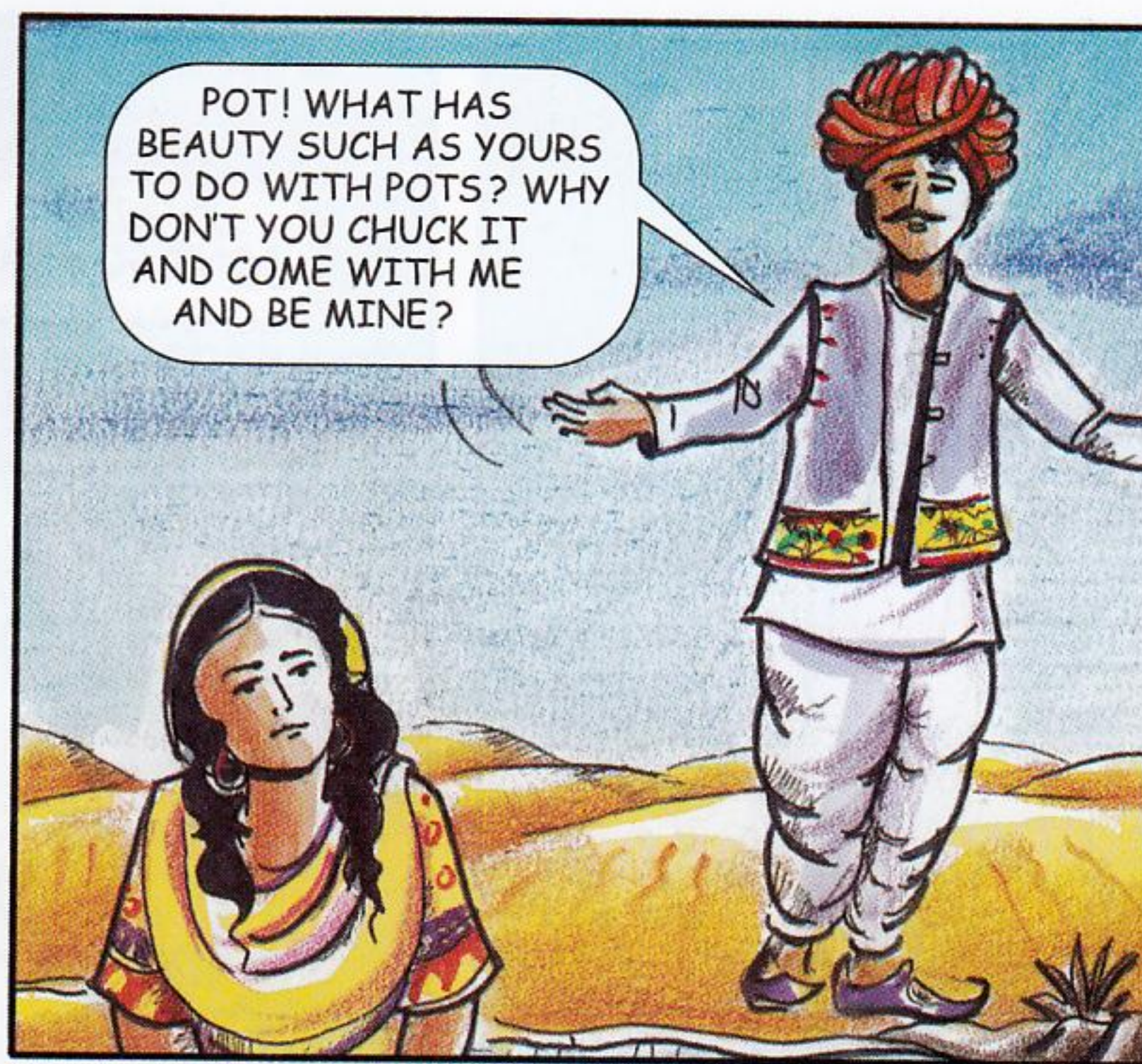
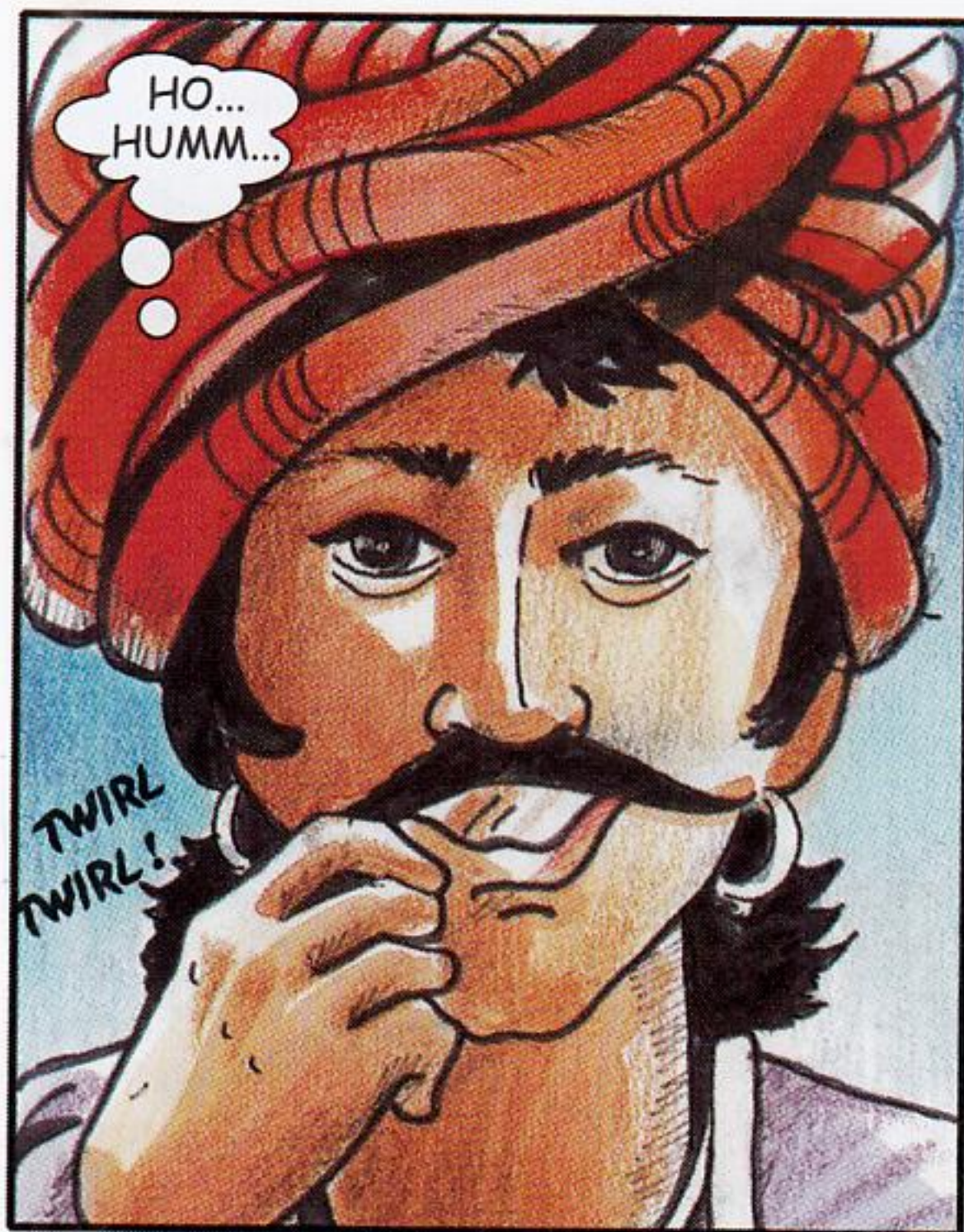
WHO ME?



YES, YOU. LEND ME A HAND, WITH THIS POT WILL YOU? THE OTHERS HAVE ALL GONE...

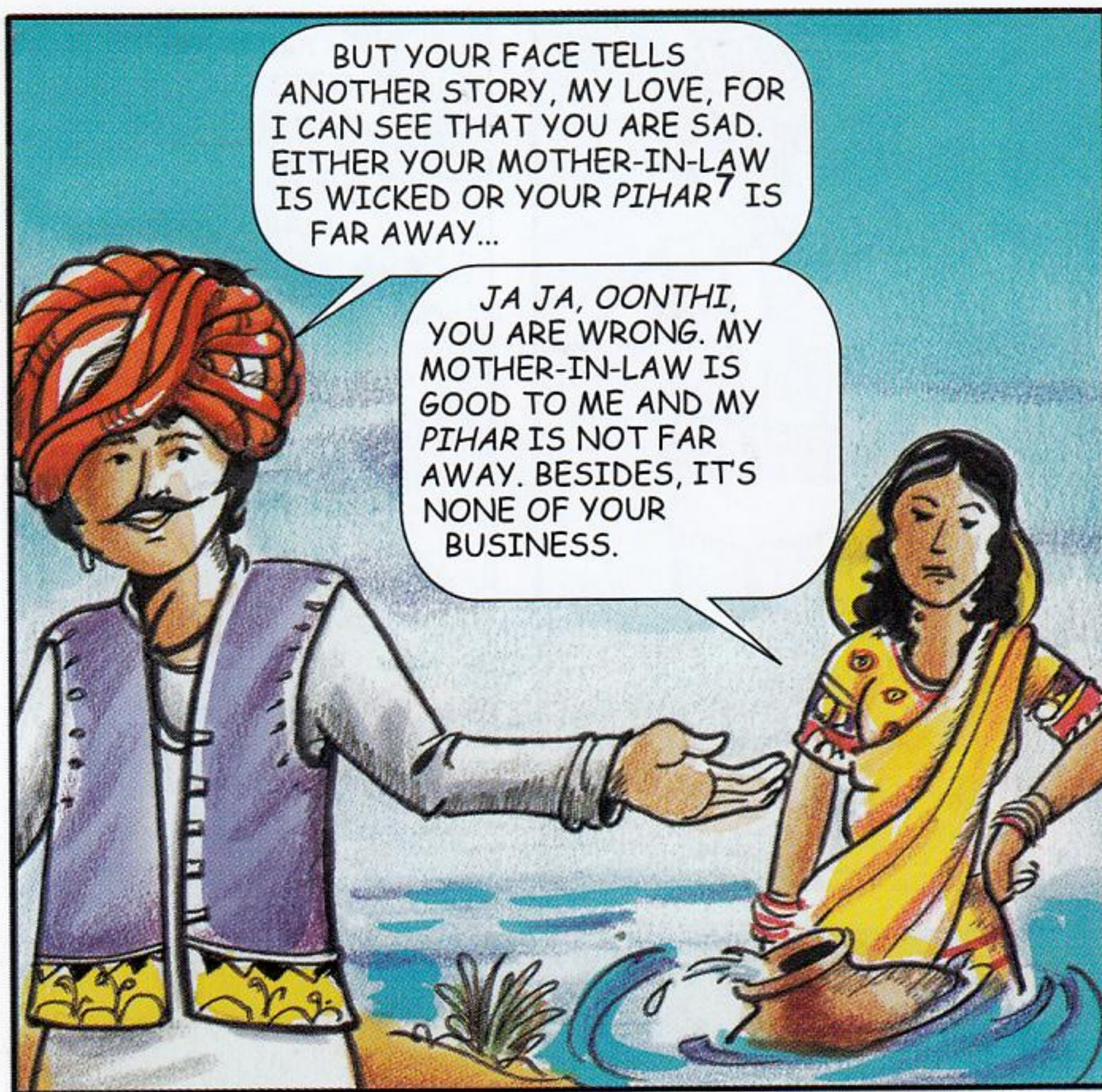




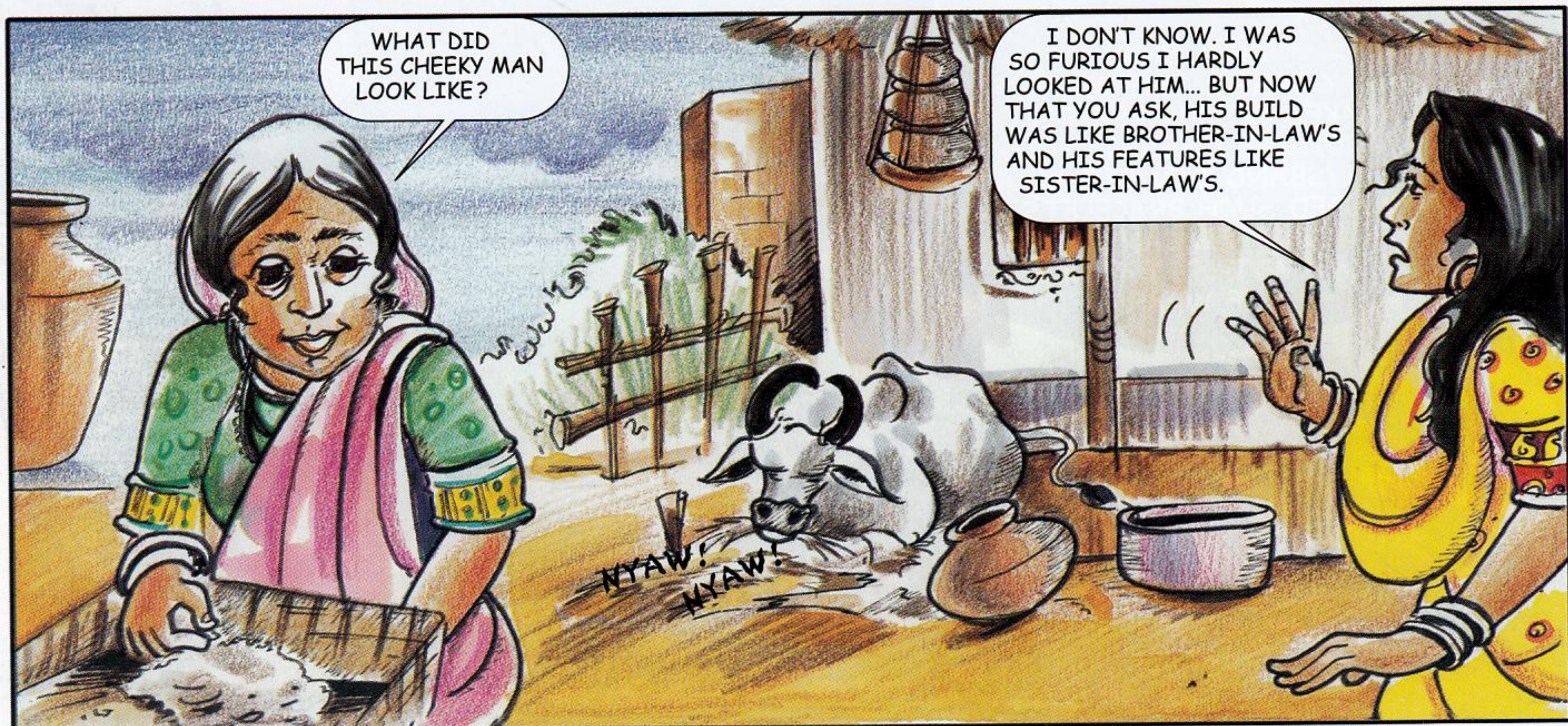


5. A thick gold choker. 6. Necklace studded with nine gems.

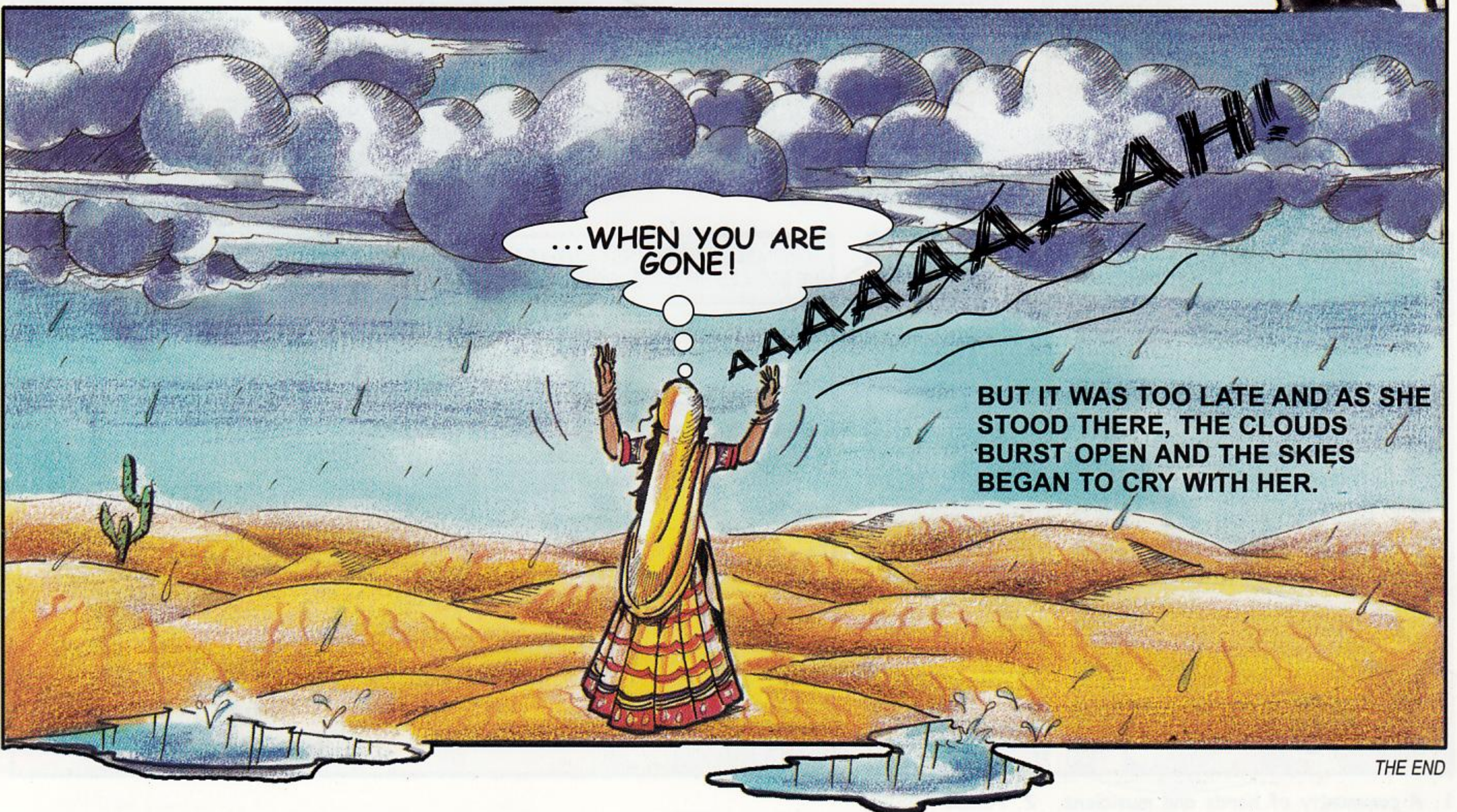
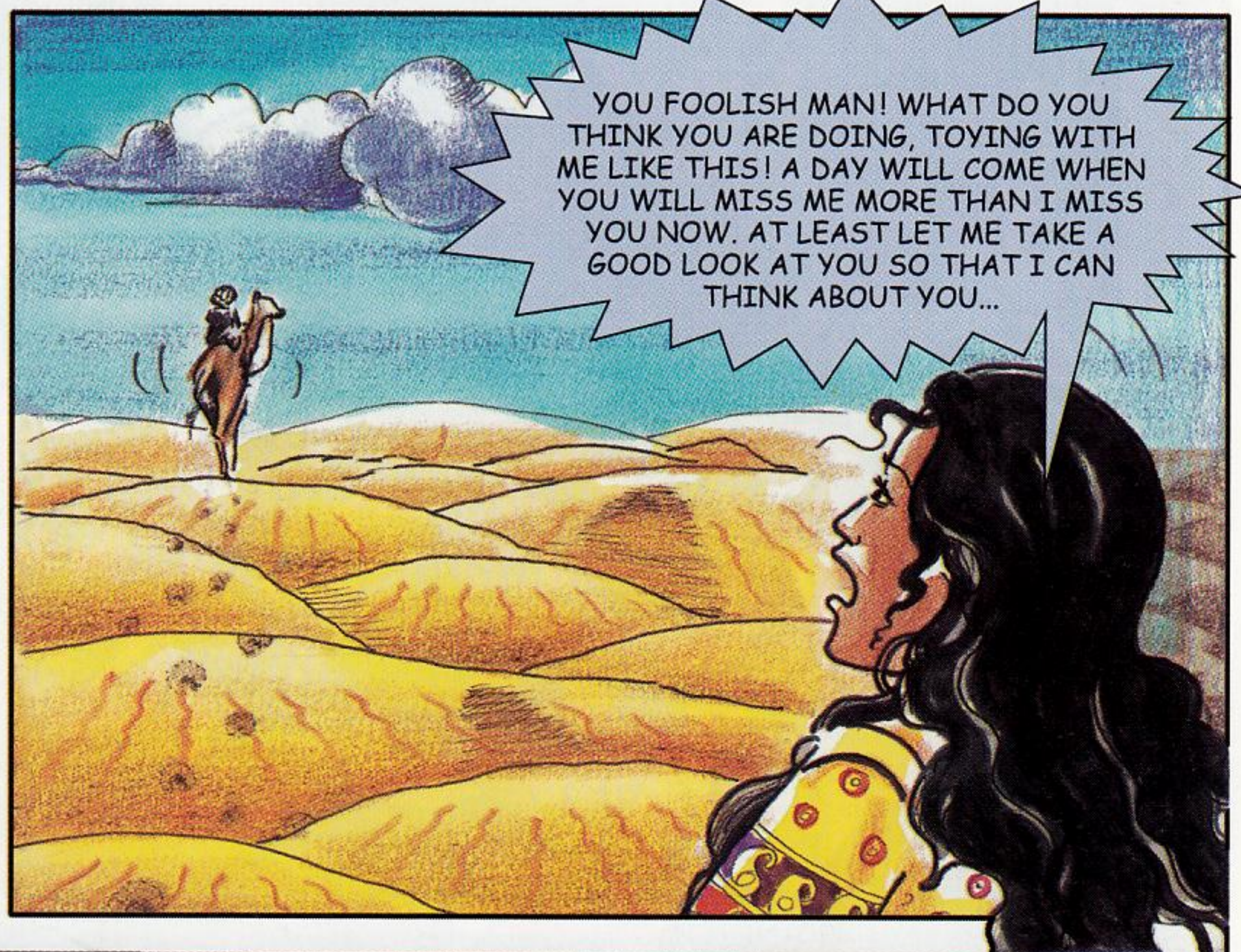
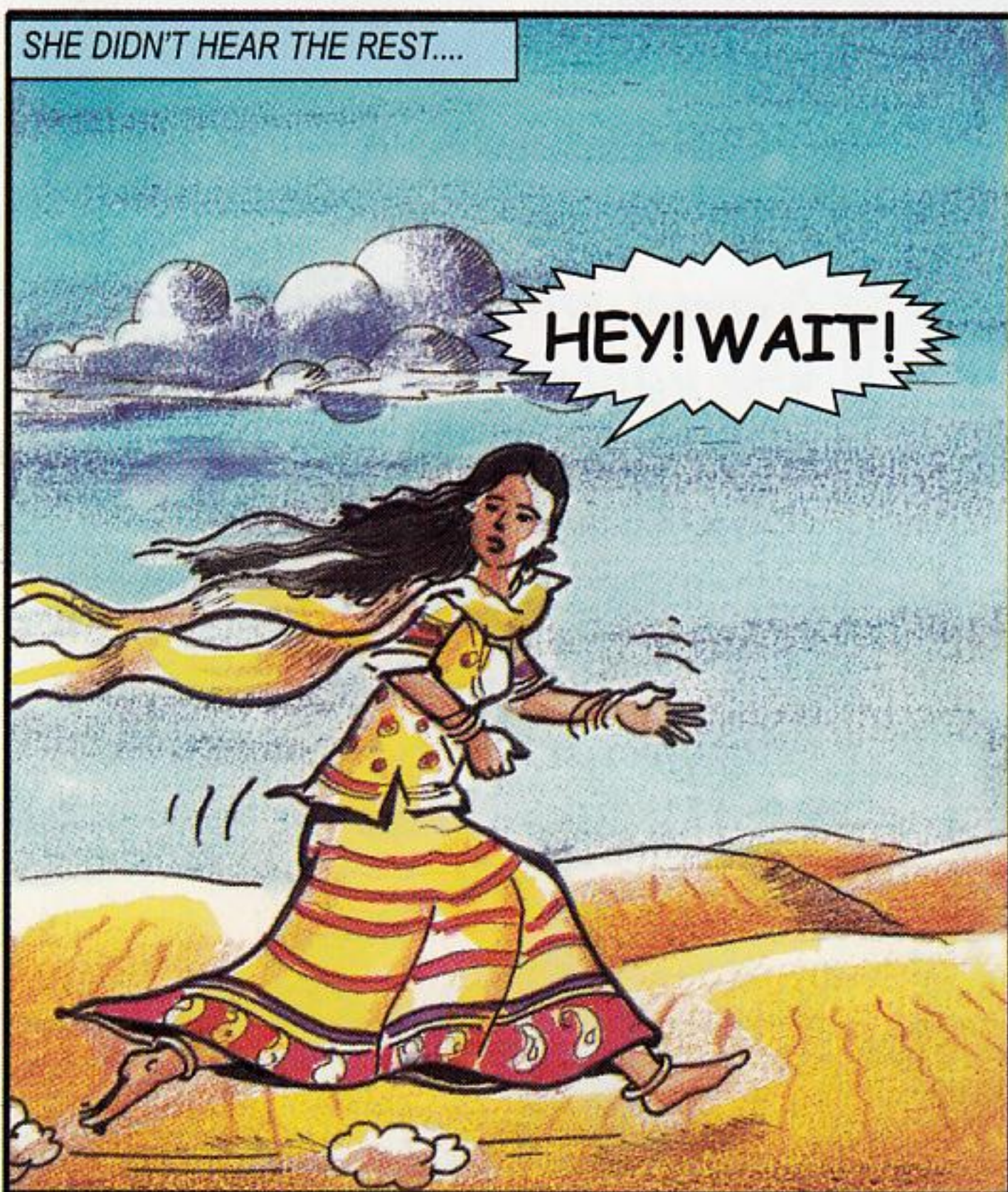
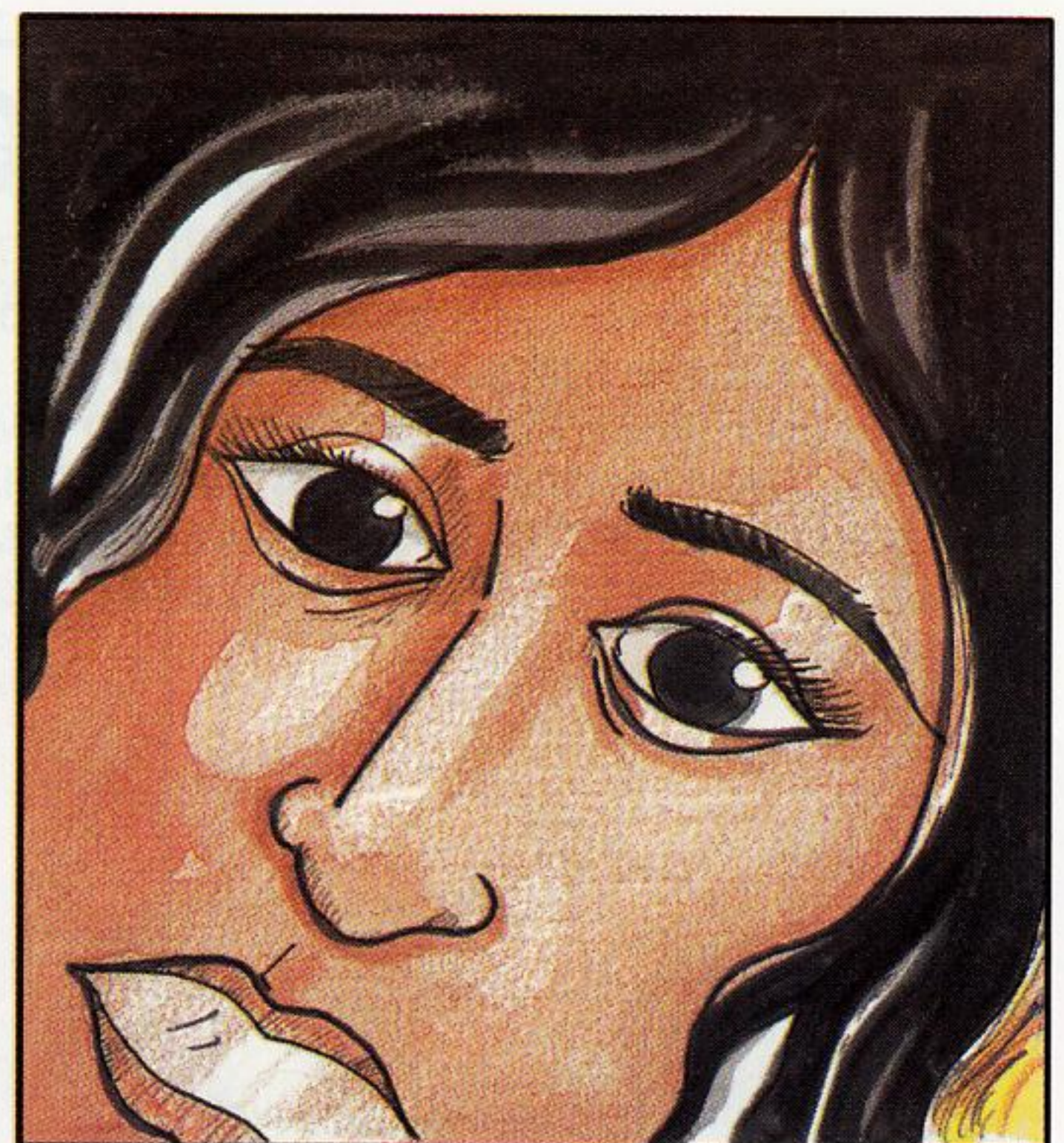
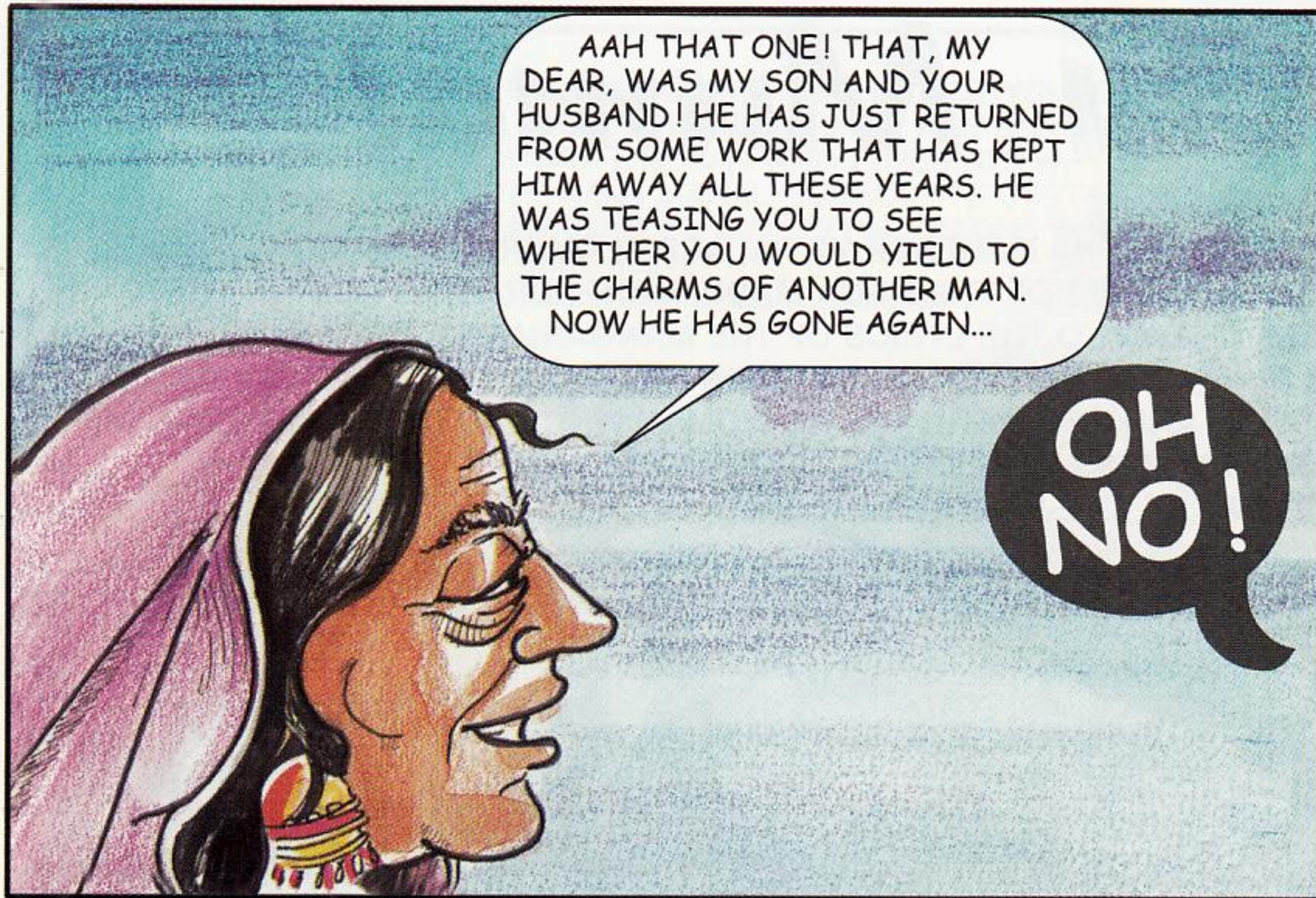




ANGRY AND RATTLED, SHE SET OFF FOR HOME. HER MOTHER-IN-LAW WAS SURPRISED.







THE END

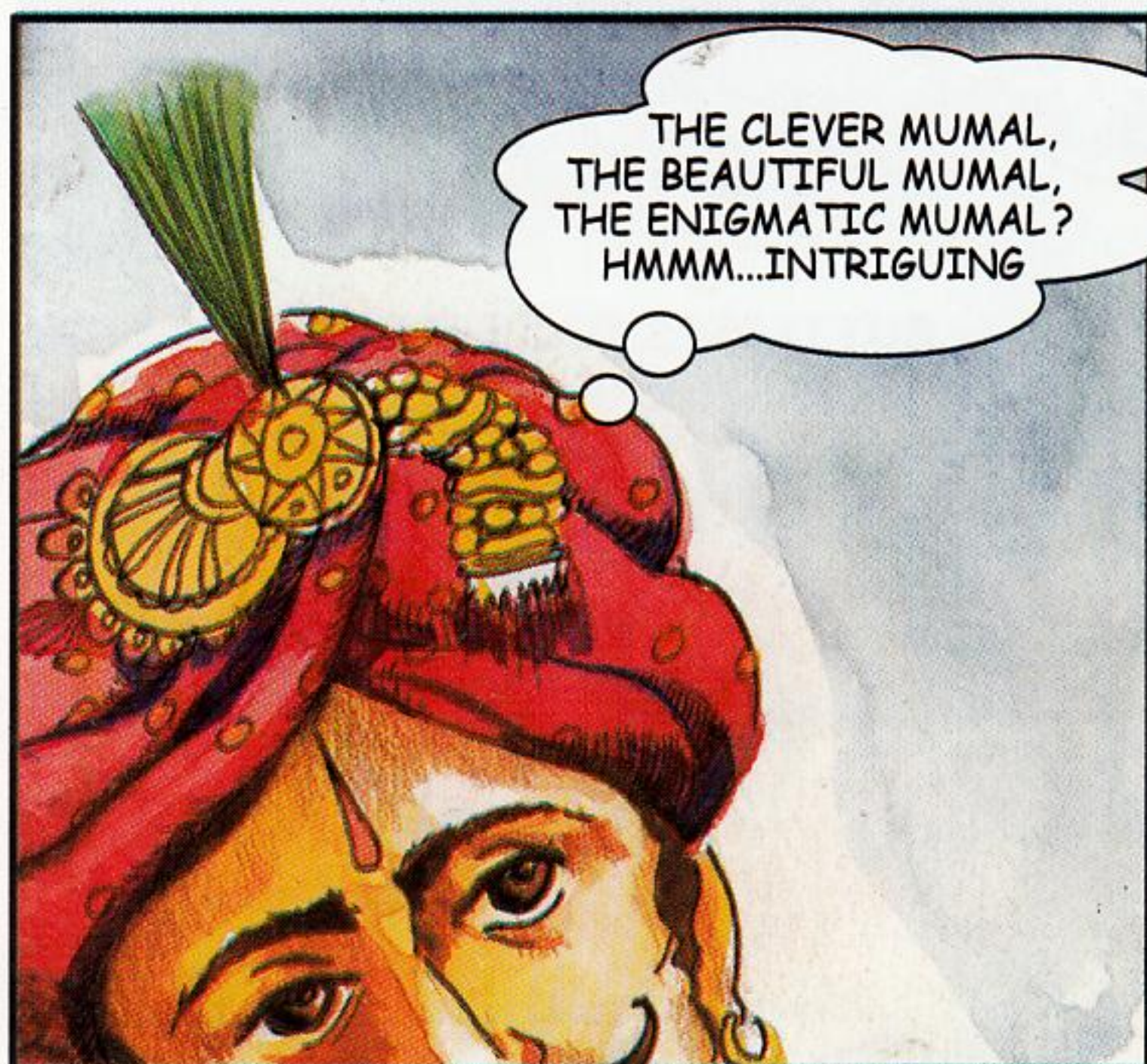


# Madechi Mumal

WE ARE IN THE GOLDEN STONE COURTYARD OF RANA SODHA MAHENDRA'S PALACE IN AMARKOT. AS NIGHT TOOK OVER, THE PALACE CAME ALIVE WITH THE MUSICAL NOTES OF THE RAGA MADH. MAHENDRA WAS LOST IN THE MELODY WHEN SUDDENLY HE FOUND HIMSELF DRAWN TO THE LYRICS OF THE MANGANIARS<sup>1</sup>. THEY SANG... MUMAL THE PRINCESS OF LODARVA, WHO HAD BUILT A MAGNIFICENT PALACE ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER KAK. IT WAS SAID THAT THIS MEDHI<sup>2</sup> WAS AS BEAUTIFUL AND ENIGMATIC AS THE WOMAN WHO HAD CREATED IT. THE MEDHI WAS BUILT WITH THE EXPRESS PURPOSE OF TESTING THE WIT OF HER TO BE LIFE-PARTNER.

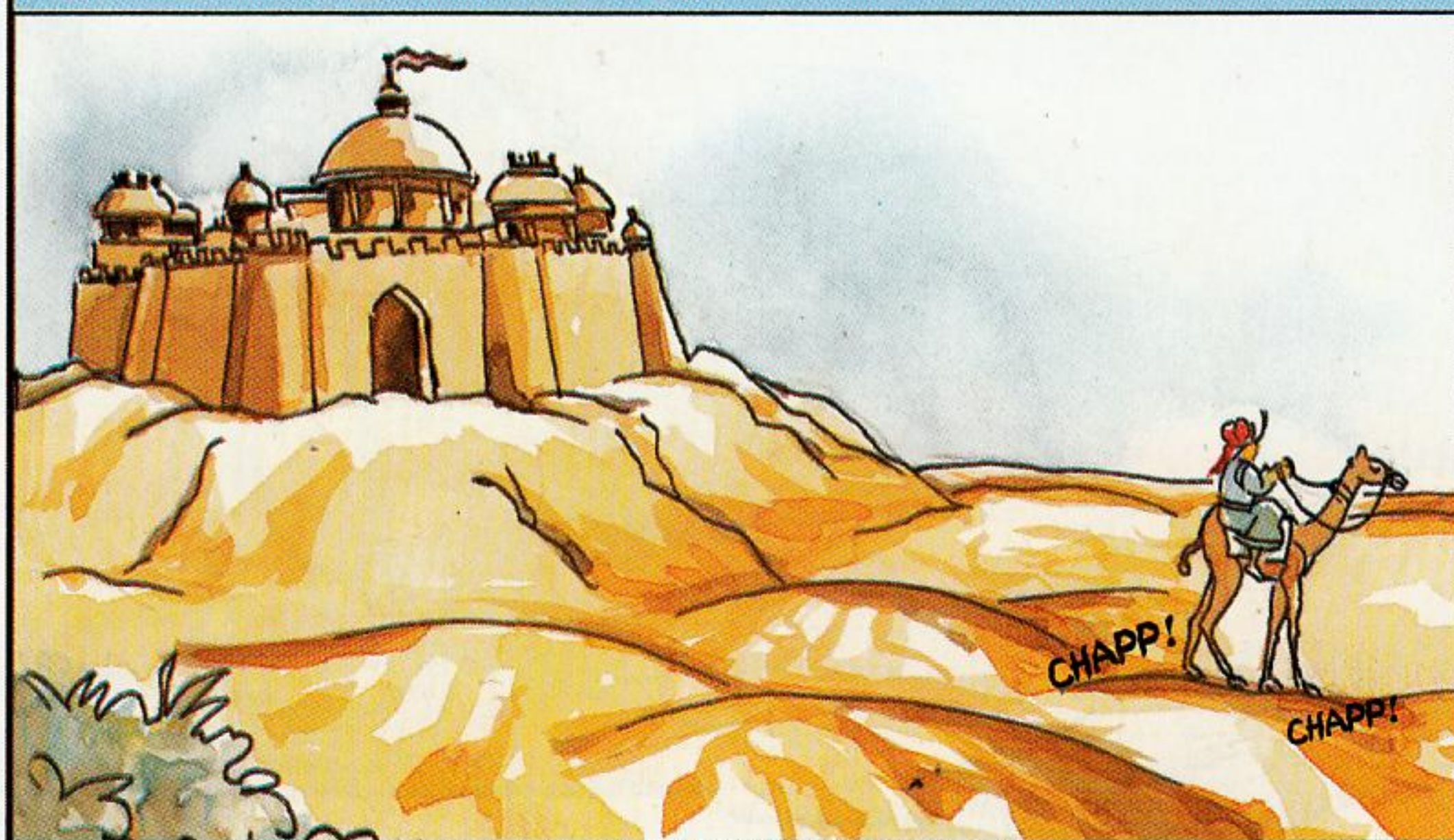


Mumal whose beauty flashes  
like lightning  
that spikes the clouds on  
rainy days  
her hair clings to her waist  
like the vasang snake  
her eyes.....  
oh the sharpness of her mind!



THE CLEVER MUMAL,  
THE BEAUTIFUL MUMAL,  
THE ENIGMATIC MUMAL?  
HMMM...INTRIGUING

MAHENDRA, WHO WAS NOT HIMSELF AFTER THAT NIGHT, COULD BEAR IT NO LONGER. THE NEXT DAY HE SADDLED HIS CAMEL AND SET OFF FOR LODARVA.





AT LODARVA...

SO THIS IS THE FAMOUS MEDHI?

THIS IS NO ORDINARY PALACE, YOUNG MAN, IT'S BUILT LIKE A MAZE. PRINCESS MUMAL HAS ANNOUNCED THAT SHE WILL MARRY THE MAN WHO FINDS HIS WAY SUCCESSFULLY INSIDE THE RANG MAHAL, SURMOUNTS OBSTACLES AND SOLVES ALL HER RIDDLES. BUT SO FAR NO ONE WHO TRIED HAS COME BACK ALIVE!

I MUST FIND A WAY TO GET INSIDE THE PALACE TONIGHT.

IT'S TIME FOR ONE OF MUMAL'S MAIDS TO COME OUT. AHAH! THERE SHE IS! SHE'S MY ONLY HOPE...

SPEAK UP OR I'LL...

NO DON'T! I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING.

GOOD!

MAHENDRA DIDN'T WASTE A MOMENT.

FIRST YOU GO PAST THE FEROCIOUS LOOKING LIONS RANA, THEY ARE ARTIFICIAL... AT THE NEXT DOOR YOU WILL SEE POISONOUS SNAKES, BUT REMEMBER, THEY'RE REAL. BEND DOWN TO YOUR RIGHT AND SLIP THROUGH THE TUNNEL THAT LEADS TO A DOOR. YOU CAN GO PAST THAT...

AT THE FOURTH GATE THE FLOOR WILL SEEM COVERED WITH WATER, BUT ACTUALLY IT IS NOT...



NOW RANA WAS IN THE RANG MAHAL.

SO WHO'S THIS WHO HAS MADE IT THIS FAR!?

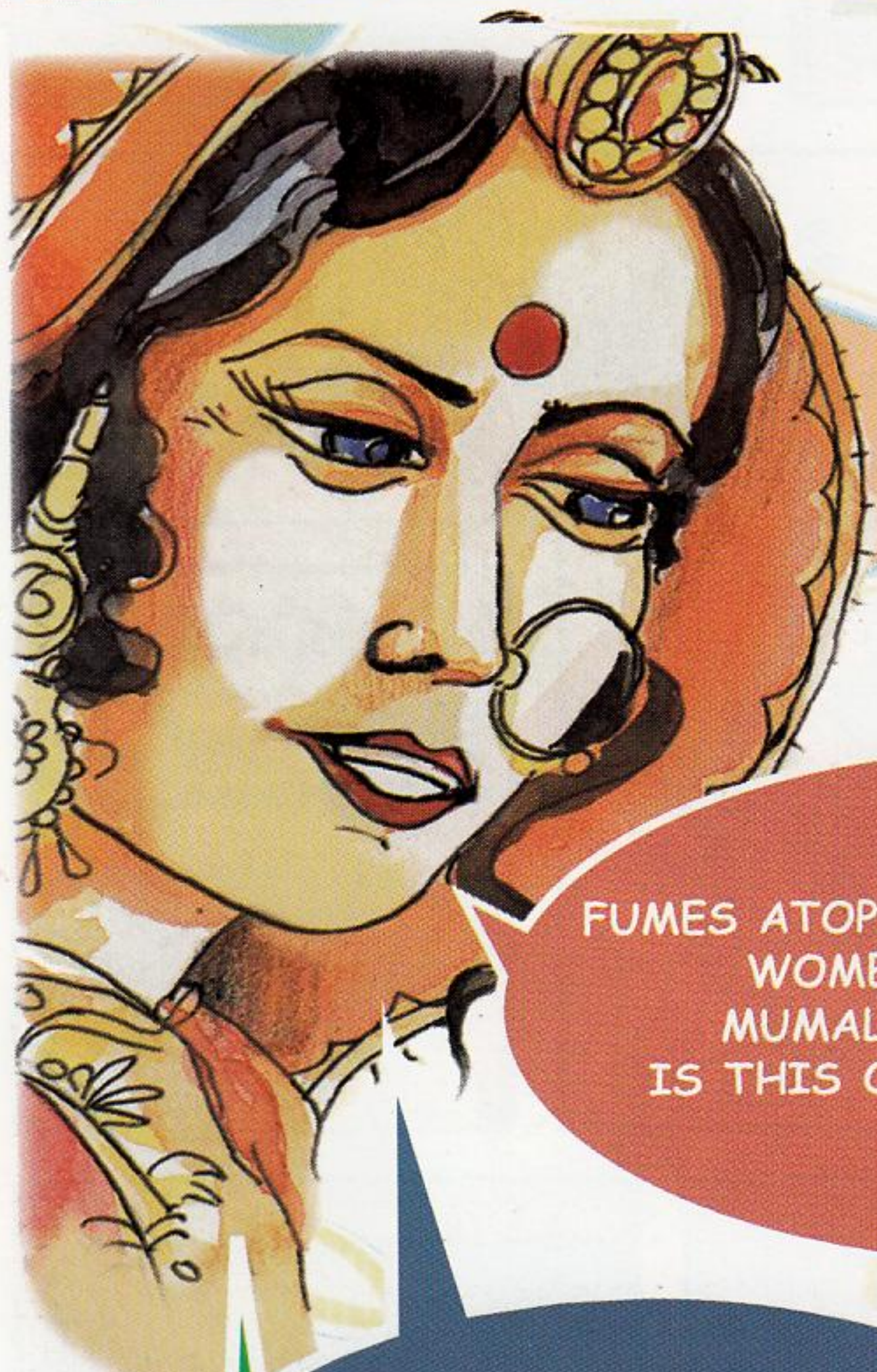
MAHENDRA WALKED PAST THE COT AND SAT NEXT TO MUMAL.

SHE IS MUCH MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN THE WORDS IN THE SONG!

HE IS GOOD LOOKING AND ALSO CLEVER. NOW LET'S SEE HOW HE RESPONDS TO THE RIDDLES!

LET ME NOT GET DECEIVED BY THE COT MADE OF WEAK THREADS WITH THE DEEP WELL UNDERNEATH.

COME BRAVE MAN, DO TAKE A SEAT.



SITTING AROUND IN THE FIELDS  
GUD GUD SOUND MEN MAKE  
MAHENDRA TELLS MUMAL  
HUKKA IT IS FOR GOD SAKE!

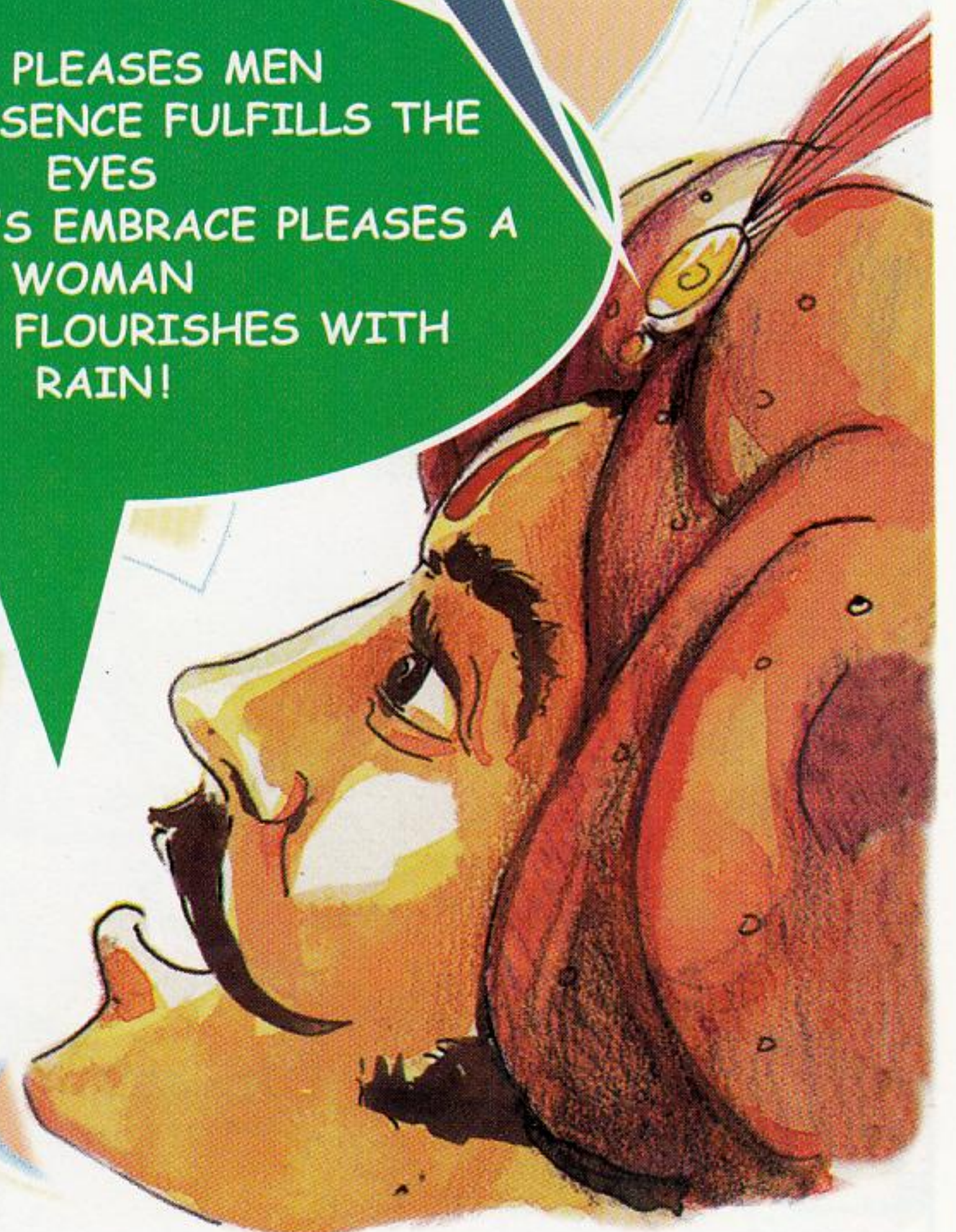
FUMES ATOP WITH ASHES BENEATH  
WOMEN SURPASS MEN  
MUMAL ASKS MAHENDRA  
IS THIS OBJECT PART OF YOUR  
KEN?

BENEATH THE VEIL  
IS BEAUTY RED ON A CREEPER  
MAHENDRA TELLS MUMAL  
IT'S WATERMELON YOU REAPER!

WOMEN SOW IT WHILE MEN REAP  
SO THEY SURPASS MEN  
MUMAL ASKS MAHENDRA  
IS THIS OBJECT PART OF YOUR  
KEN?

LOVE PLEASES MEN  
LOVER'S PRESENCE FULFILLS THE  
EYES  
THE BELOVED'S EMBRACE PLEASES A  
WOMAN  
AND LAND FLOURISHES WITH  
RAIN!

MUSIC FAILS TO PLEASE MEN  
LOVER'S BEAUTY FAILS TO PLEASE THE  
EYES  
MEN FAIL TO PLEASE WOMEN  
AND RAIN IS NEVER ENOUGH  
FOR THE LAND.





A GANDHARVA VIVAH<sup>3</sup> UNITED THE TWO IN A BOND OF LOVE.

AT LAST! I HAVE FOUND THE MAN WHO IS WORTHY OF BEING MY HUSBAND!



A MONTH PASSED. MUMAL AND RANA WERE BLISSFULLY HAPPY. BUT...

I WISH I DID NOT HAVE TO GO BACK TO AMARKOT. BUT I DO HAVE TO AND HELP MY BLIND FATHER RUN OUR KINGDOM.



SOON THEREFORE

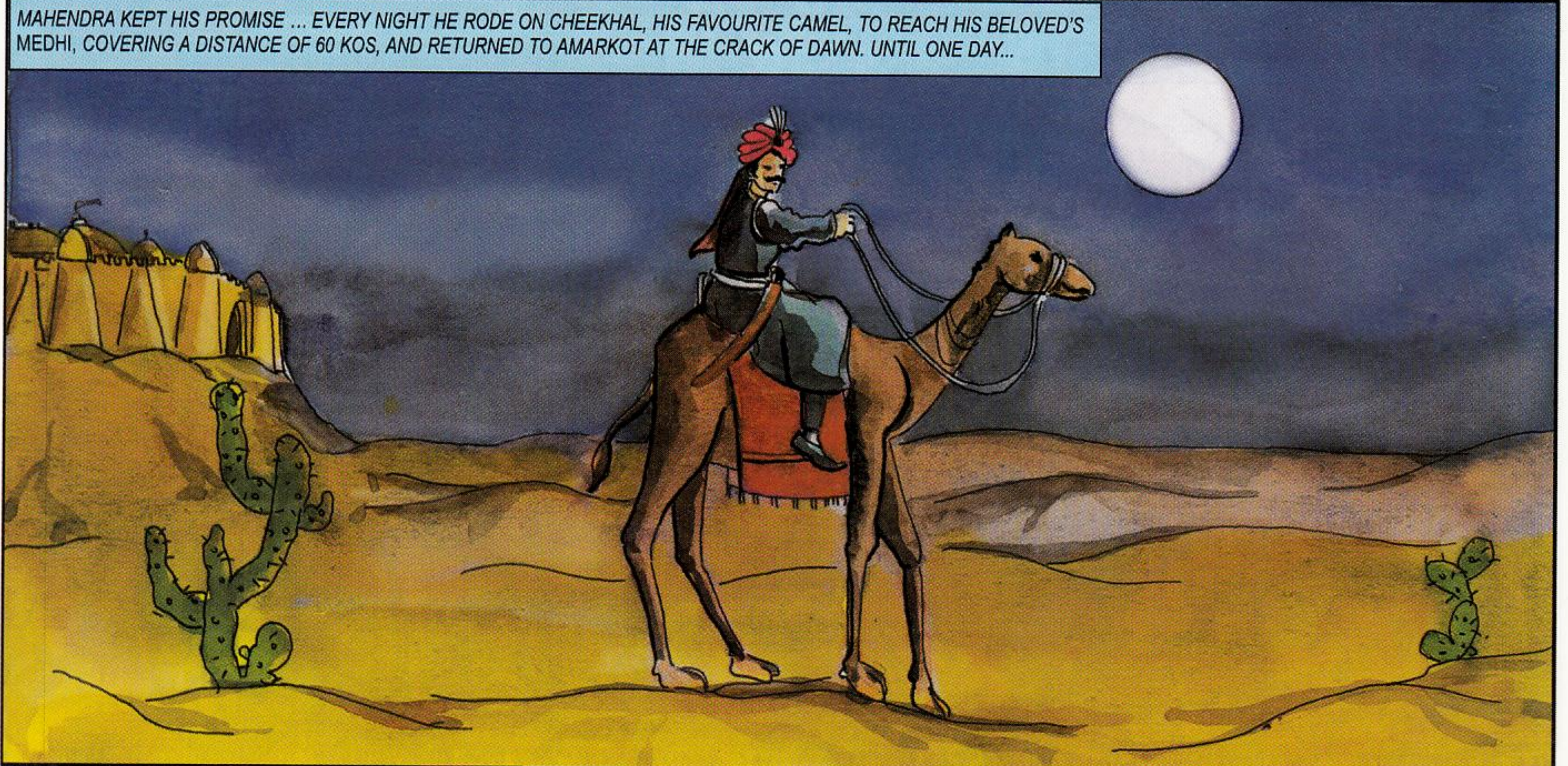
MUMAL, I WILL COME TO SEE YOU EVERY NIGHT, I PROMISE!



GOODBYE!



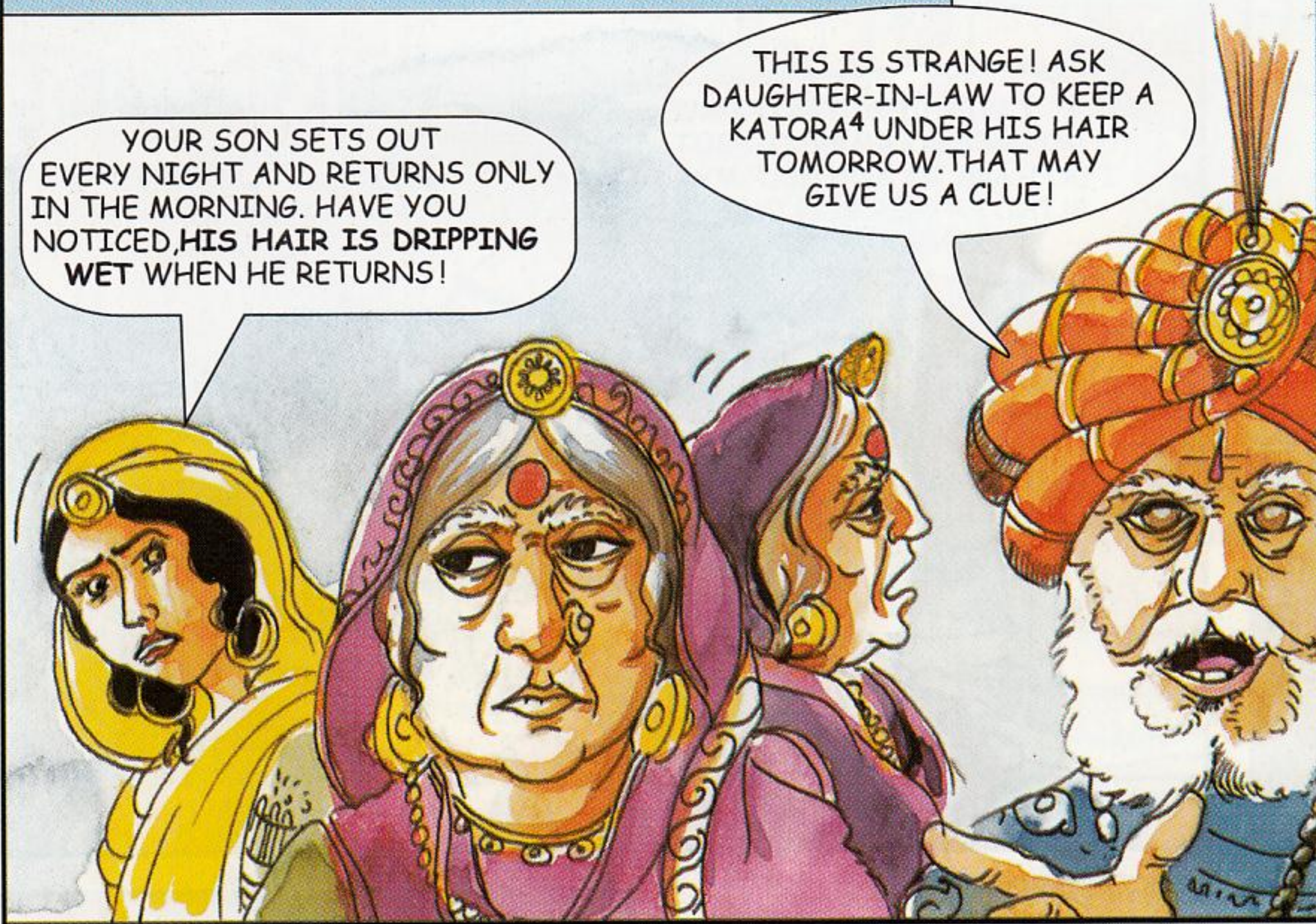
MAHENDRA KEPT HIS PROMISE ... EVERY NIGHT HE RODE ON CHEEKHAL, HIS FAVOURITE CAMEL, TO REACH HIS BELOVED'S MEDHI, COVERING A DISTANCE OF 60 KOS, AND RETURNED TO AMARKOT AT THE CRACK OF DAWN. UNTIL ONE DAY...



3. A marriage solemnised by an exchange of garlands.

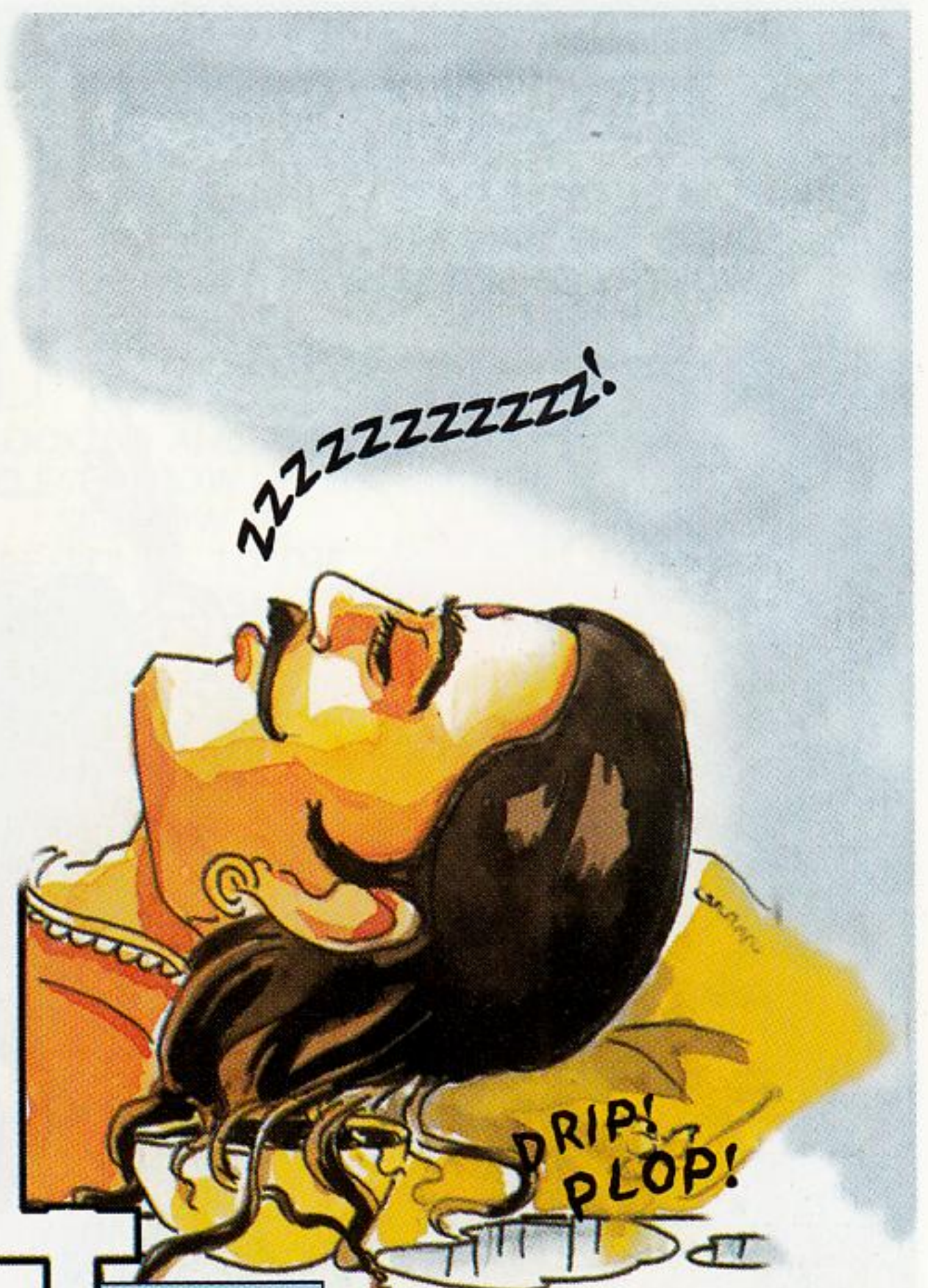


MAHENDRA'S FIRST WIFE SHARED HER CONCERN WITH HER MOTHER-IN-LAW...

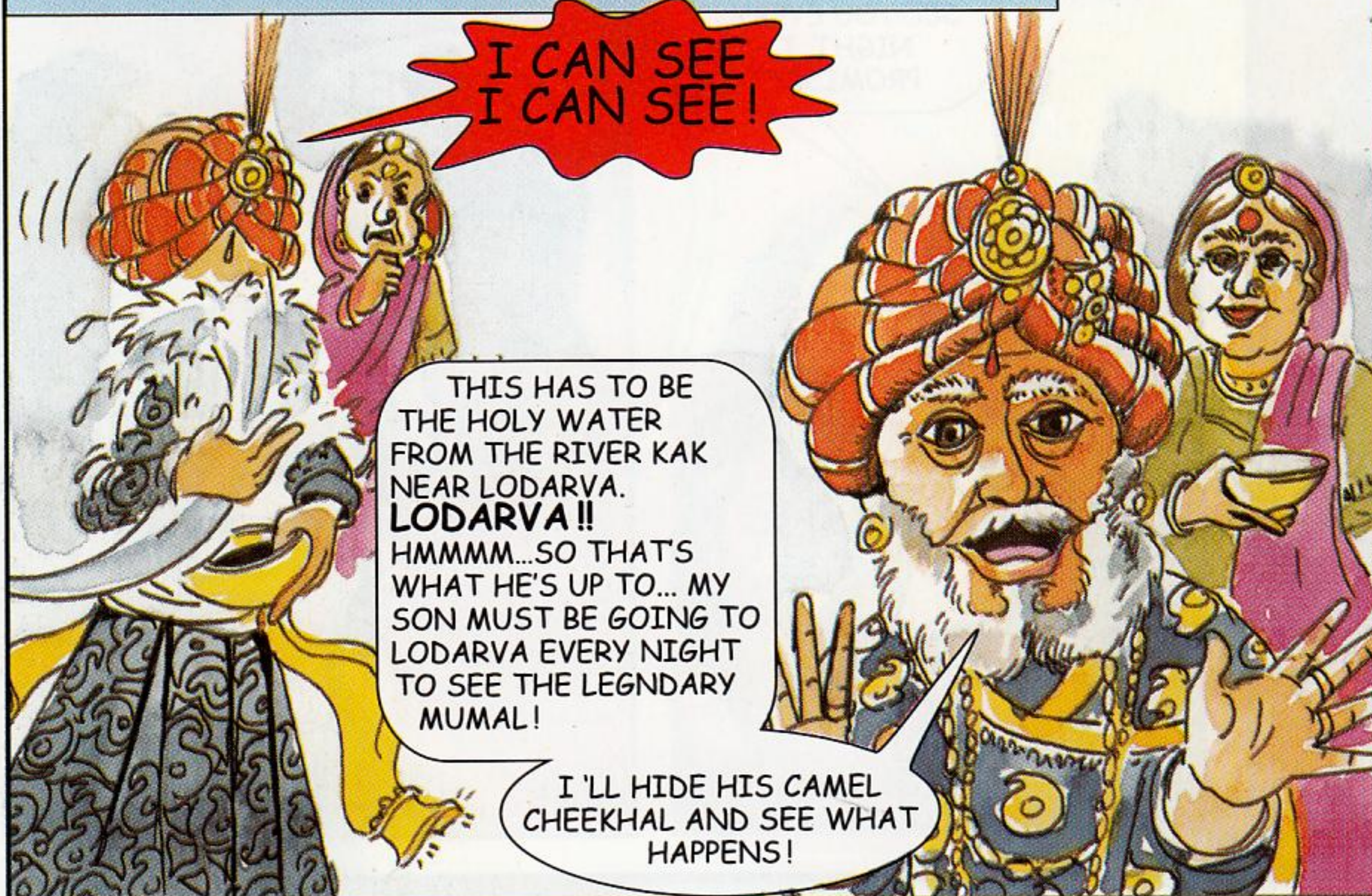


YOUR SON SETS OUT EVERY NIGHT AND RETURNS ONLY IN THE MORNING. HAVE YOU NOTICED, HIS HAIR IS DRIPPING WET WHEN HE RETURNS!

THIS IS STRANGE! ASK DAUGHTER-IN-LAW TO KEEP A KATORA<sup>4</sup> UNDER HIS HAIR TOMORROW. THAT MAY GIVE US A CLUE!



NEXT DAY MAHENDRA'S BLIND FATHER APPLIED THIS WATER TO HIS EYES. SUDDENLY...



I CAN SEE I CAN SEE!

THIS HAS TO BE THE HOLY WATER FROM THE RIVER KAK NEAR LODARVA. LODARVA!! HMMMM...SO THAT'S WHAT HE'S UP TO... MY SON MUST BE GOING TO LODARVA EVERY NIGHT TO SEE THE LEGNDARY MUMAL!

I'LL HIDE HIS CAMEL CHEEKHAL AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS!

THAT NIGHT...



MEANWHILE AT LODARVA... MUMAL AND HER SISTER...



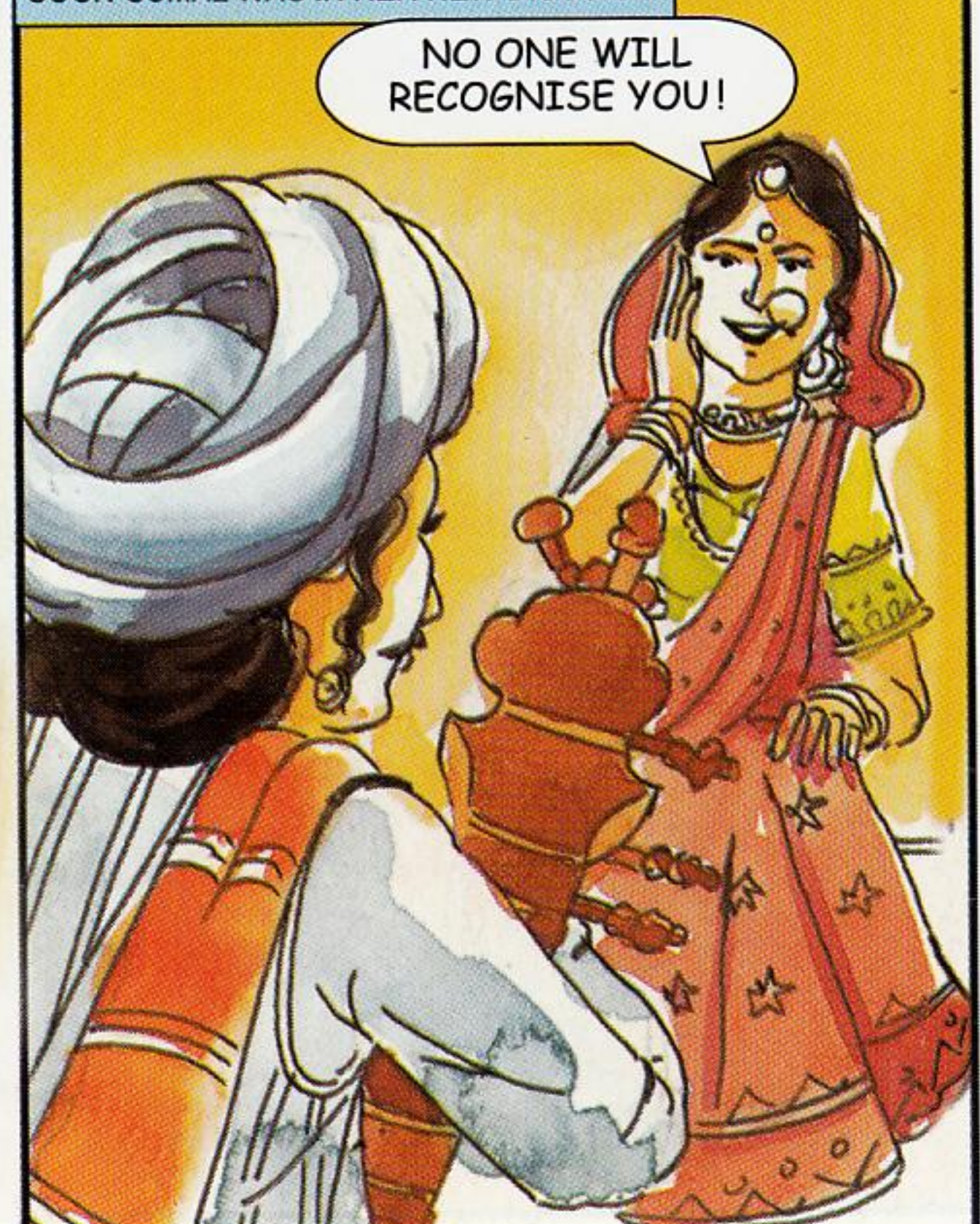
MUMAL, I HAVE COME ALL THE WAY FROM CHATREL TO SEE THE MAN THAT HAS TAKEN YOUR FANCY! WILL YOU NOT SHOW HIM TO ME?

THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE SUMAL, HE COMES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT AND LEAVES BEFORE DAYBREAK. SOME OTHER TIME PERHAPS.

NO, THAT WON'T DO, I MUST SEE HIM TONIGHT!

VERY WELL THEN. DISGUISE YOURSELF AS A MANGANAR, PLAY ON THE KAMAICHA<sup>5</sup> AND SING FOR HIM WHEN HE COMES.

SOON SUMAL WAS IN HER NEW DISGUISE.



NO ONE WILL RECOGNISE YOU!

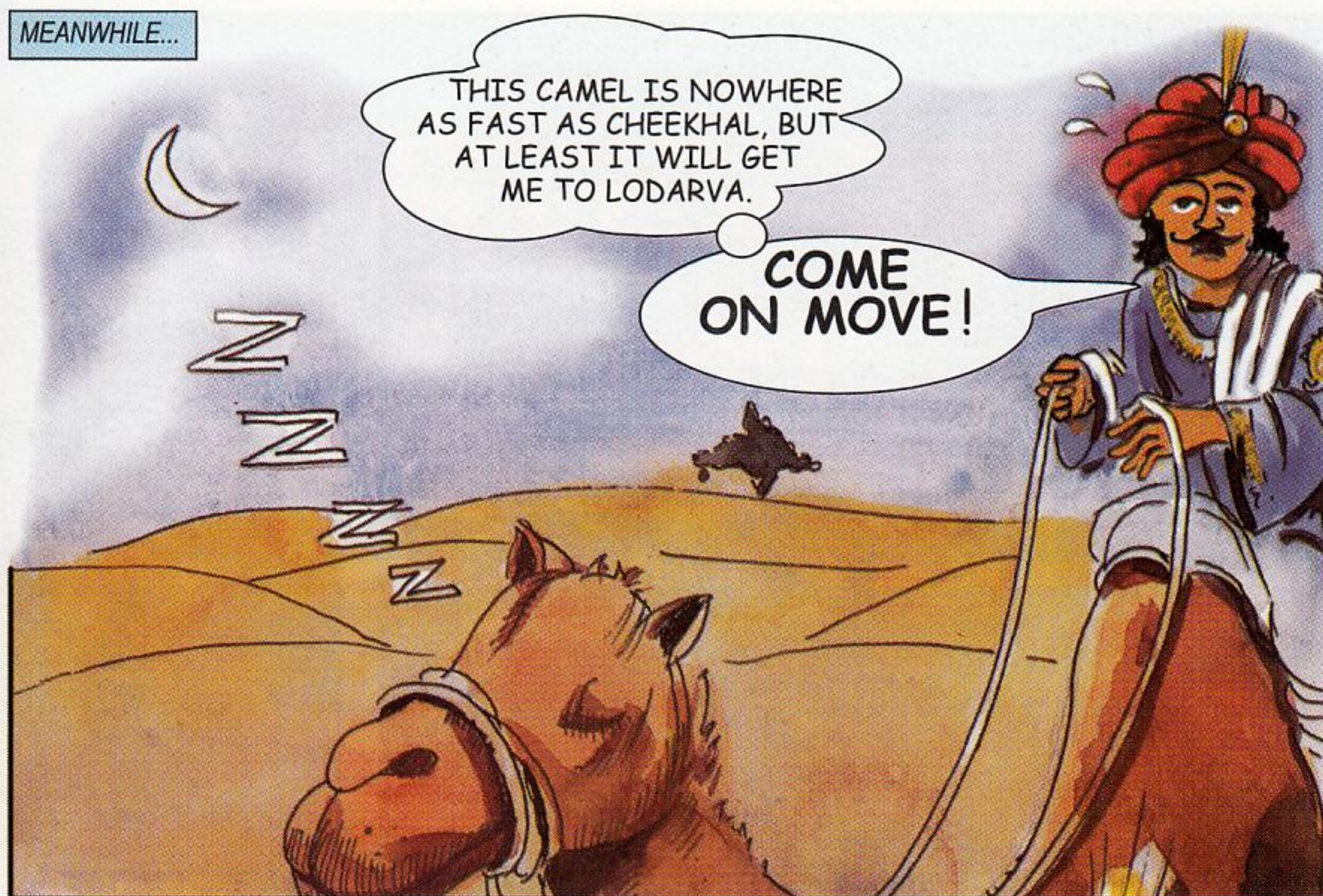
4. Smallbowl. 5. A string instrument



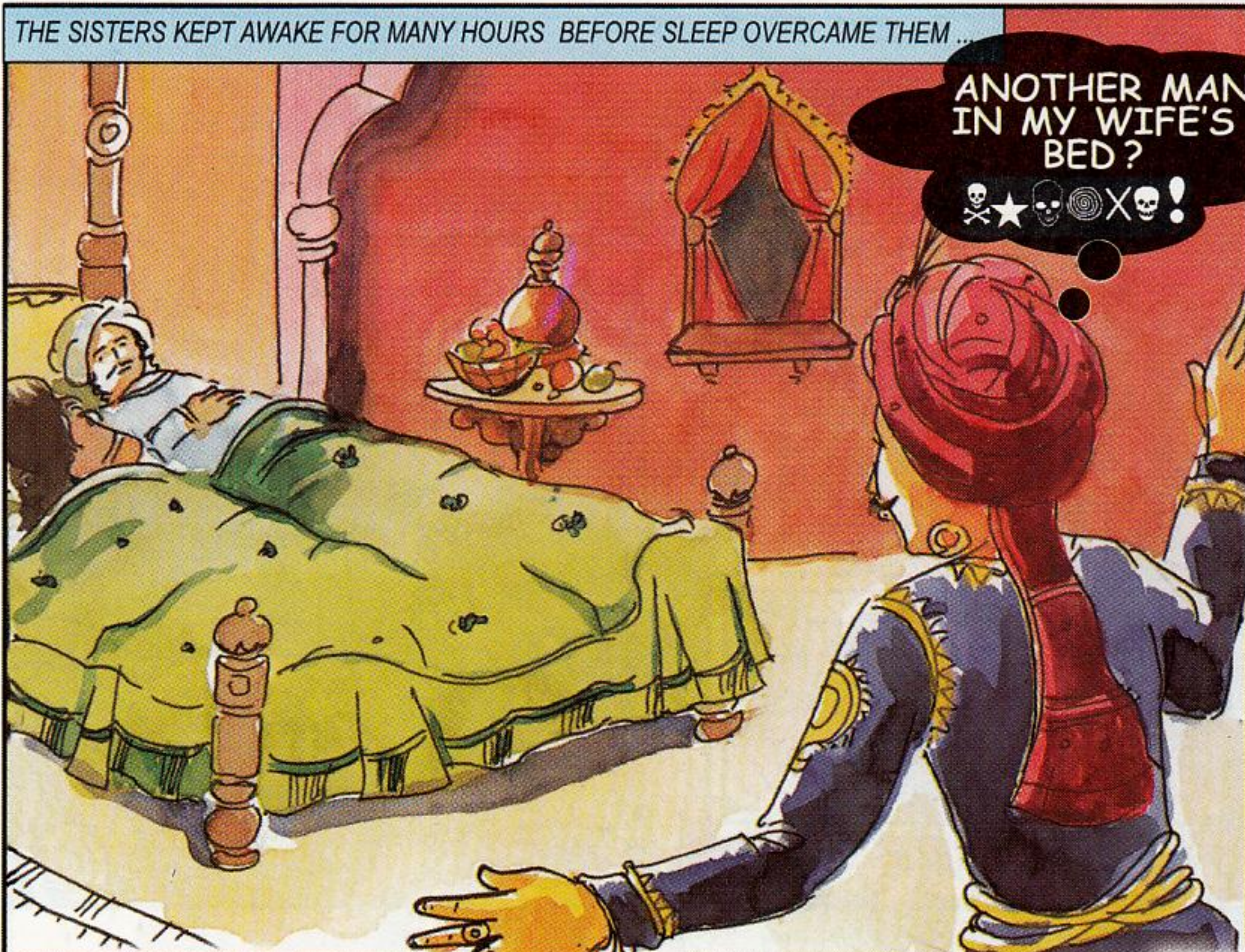
AND THE TWO SISTERS BEGAN TO WAIT...



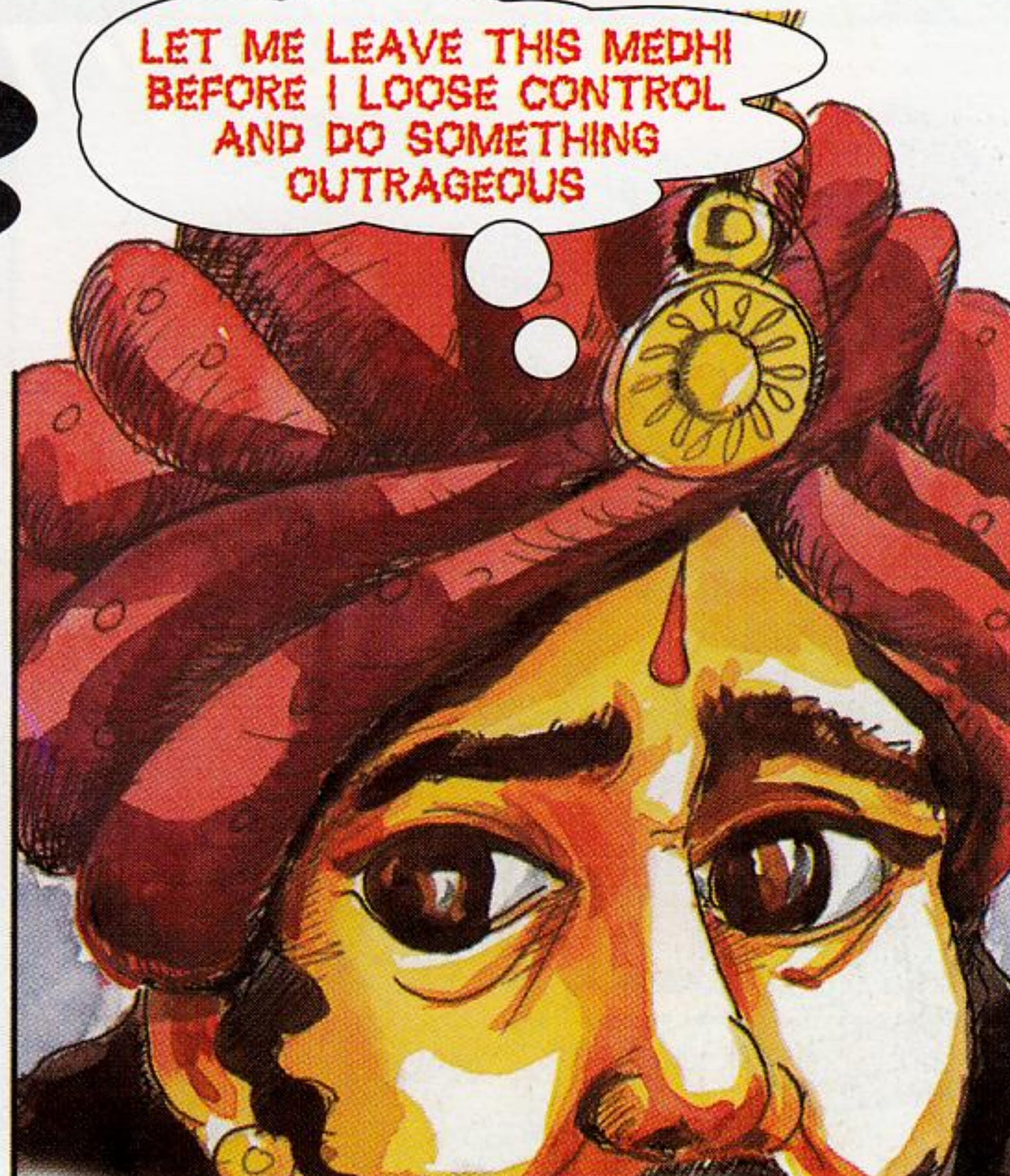
MEANWHILE...



THE SISTERS KEPT AWAKE FOR MANY HOURS BEFORE SLEEP OVERCAME THEM...



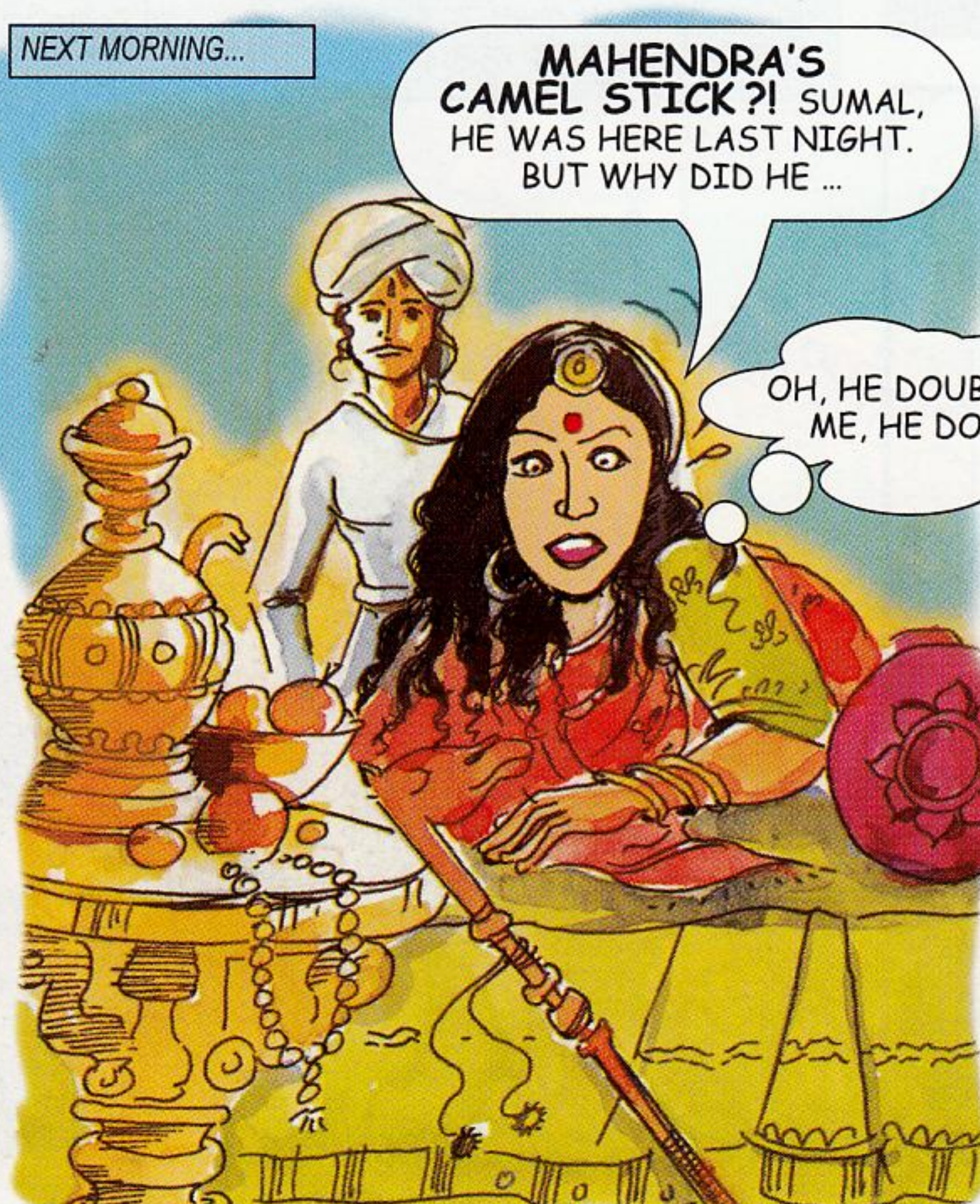
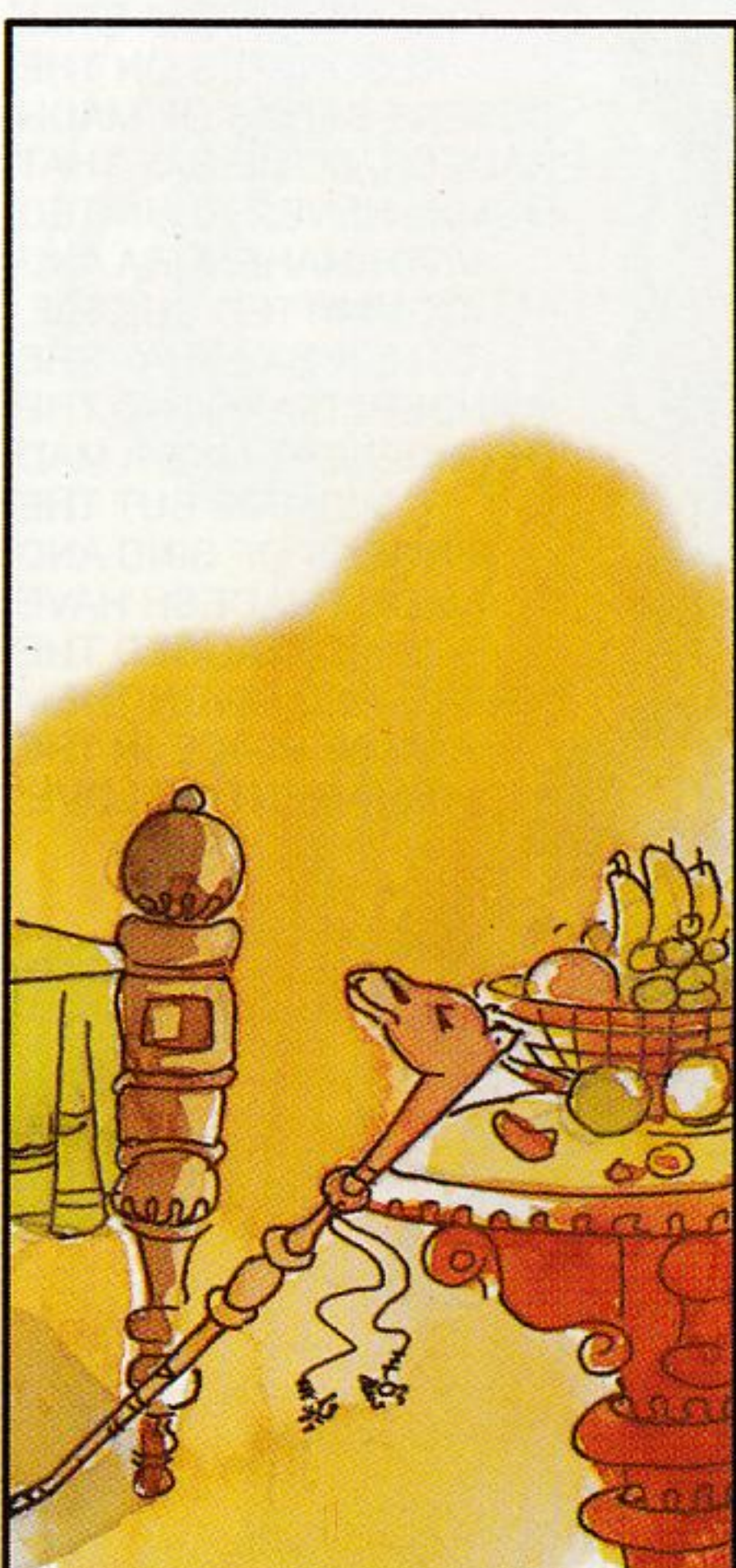
LET ME LEAVE THIS MEDHI BEFORE I LOOSE CONTROL AND DO SOMETHING OUTRAGEOUS



NEXT MORNING...

MAHENDRA'S CAMEL STICK?! SUMAL, HE WAS HERE LAST NIGHT. BUT WHY DID HE ...

OH, HE DOUBTS ME, HE DOES!

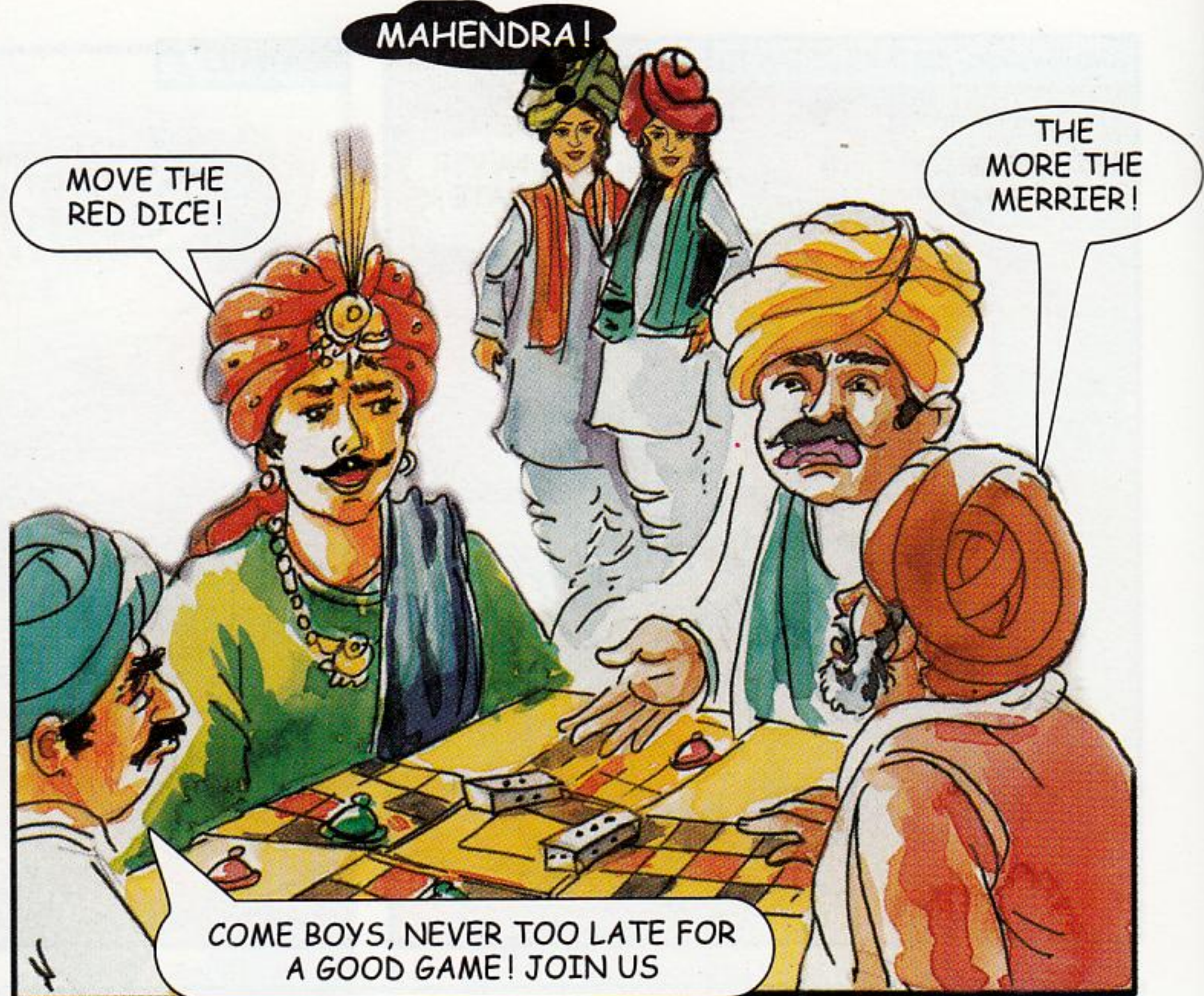


THE WAIT WAS ENDLESS. MAHENDRA NEVER RETURNED TO LODARVA.





MUMAL WAS TIRED OF WAITING. ONE DAY, SHE AND SUMAL SET OFF FOR AMARKOT. DRESSED AS BANJARAS,<sup>6</sup> THEY SOON FOUND THEIR WAY INTO THE FORT CLAIMING TO BE CLEVER CHAUPAD<sup>7</sup> PLAYERS.



SUDDENLY MAHENDRA'S EYES FELL ON MUMAL'S ARM...



THE TWO LOVERS WERE OVERJOYED AND ACCORDING TO LEGEND, LEFT THEIR MORTAL PHYSICAL FORM, TO BE UNITED FOREVER IN ANOTHER WORLD.



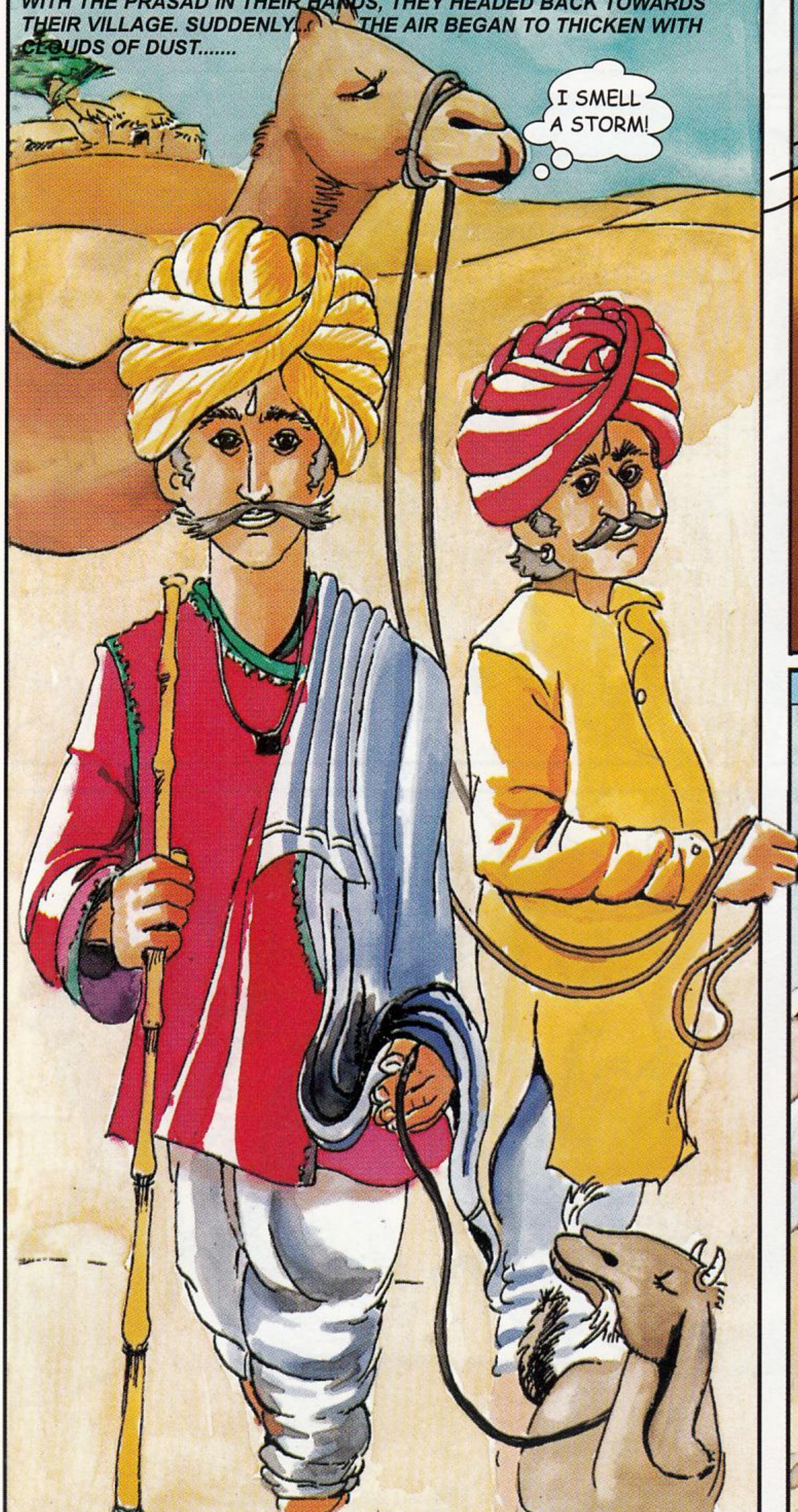
THE STORY OF MUMAL AND MAHENDRA STILL RESONATES ON THE DESERT SANDS OF MADH PRADESH. SOME SAY THAT MUMAL NEVER REUNITED WITH MAHENDRA AND COMMITTED SUICIDE. OTHER SAY THAT SHE WANDERED AROUND THE THAR DESERT LIKE A MAD WOMAN. BUT THE SINGERS OF SIND AND MADH PRADESH HAVE IMMORTALISED THE COUPLE AND GIVEN THEM A SURE PLACE IN THE FIRMAMENT OF LOVE.



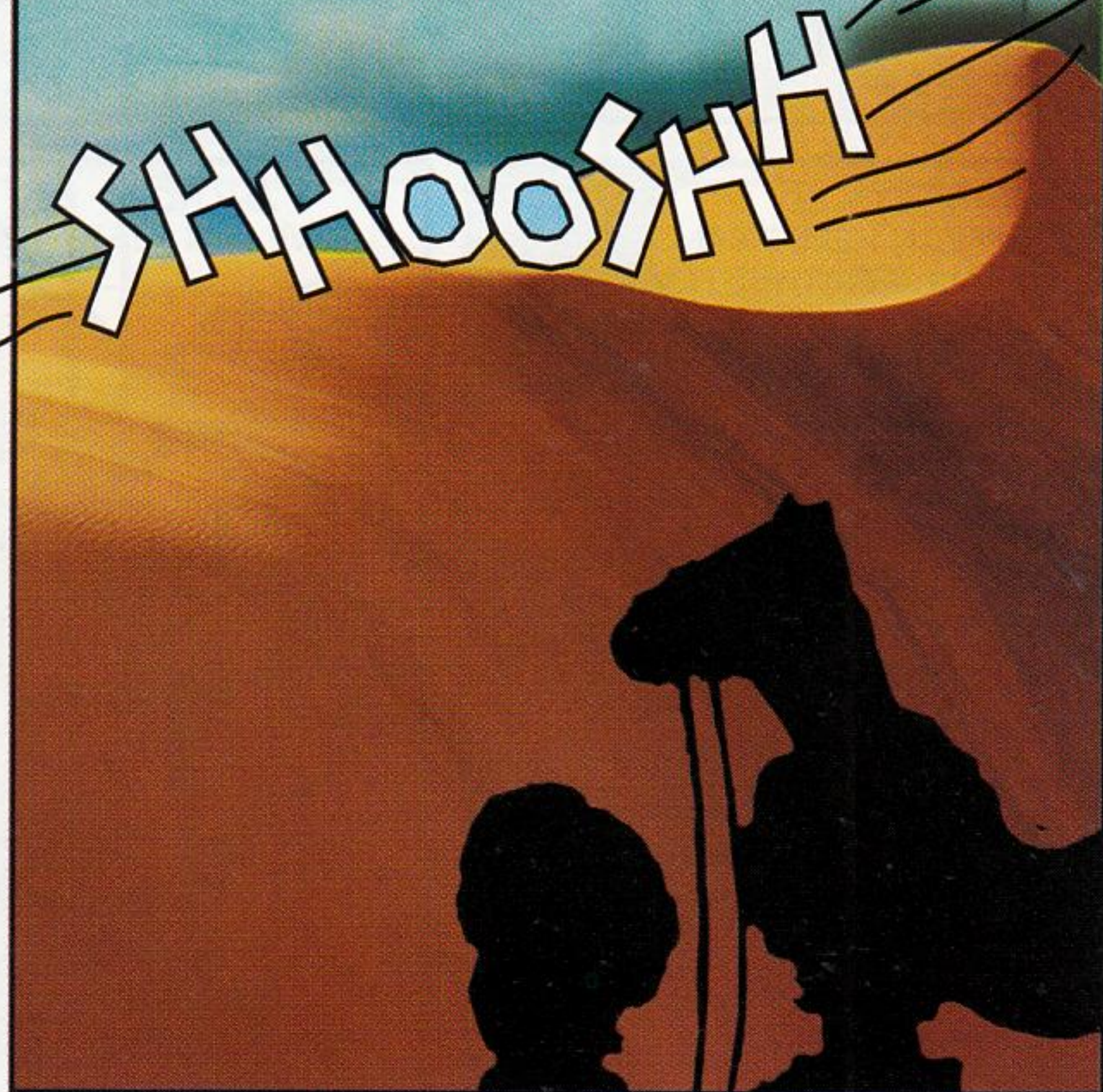


# THE HAUNTED HAVELI

THESE ARE TWO BRAHMIN BROTHERS BELONGING TO A JATA FAMILY OF VILLAGE BHOJAKA. THEY WERE DEVOUT FOLLOWERS OF LORD VISHNU AND ONCE EVERY TEN MONTHS IT WAS THEIR TURN TO PERFORM THE PUJA AT THE LAKSHMINATH TEMPLE WHICH WAS 10 KOS<sup>1</sup> AWAY FROM THEIR VILLAGE. ONE SUCH DAY, AFTER THE PUJA, WITH THE PRASAD IN THEIR HANDS, THEY HEADED BACK TOWARDS THEIR VILLAGE. SUDDENLY... THE AIR BEGAN TO THICKEN WITH CLOUDS OF DUST.....



BUT...SUCH A STORM HIT THEM...

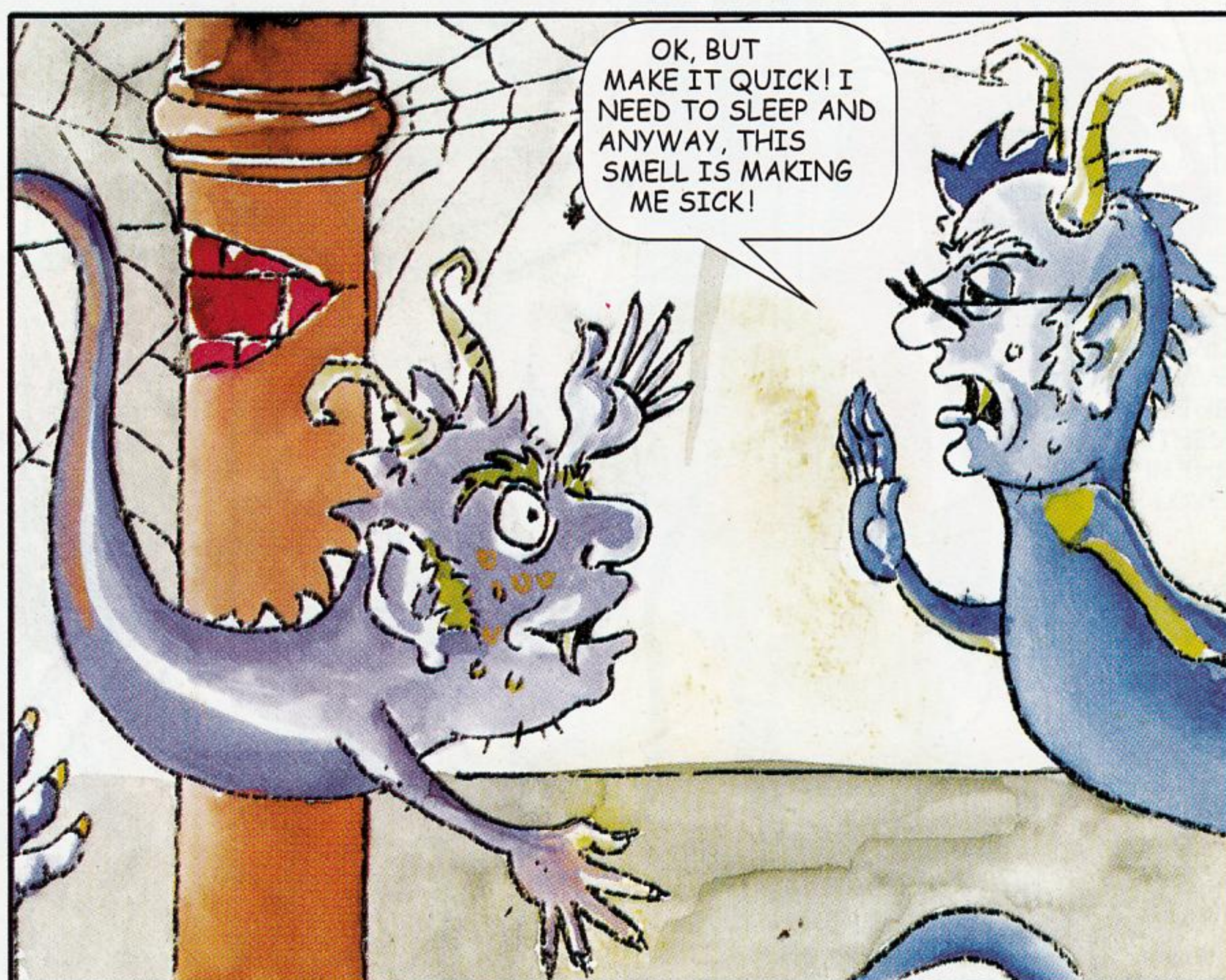
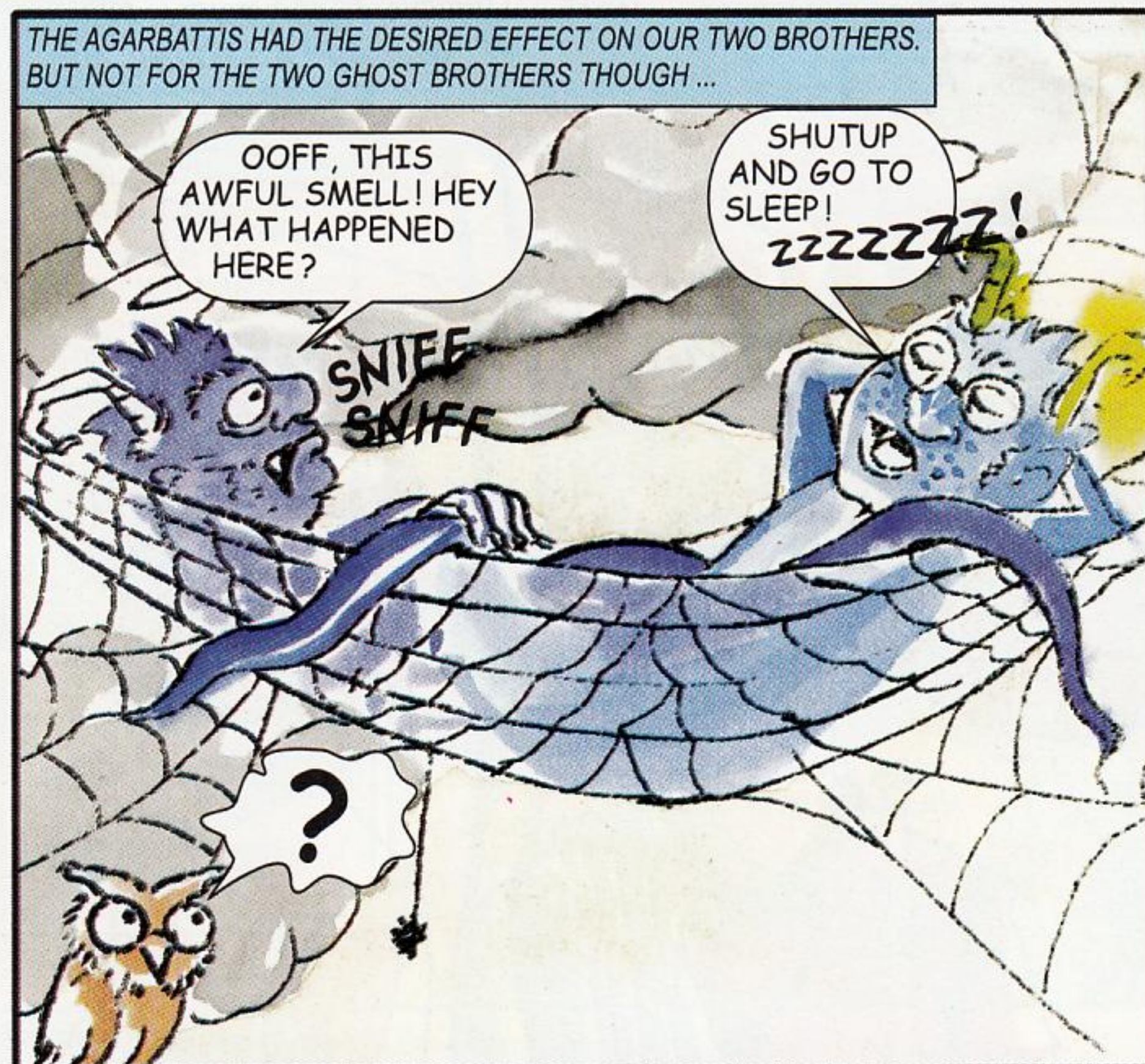
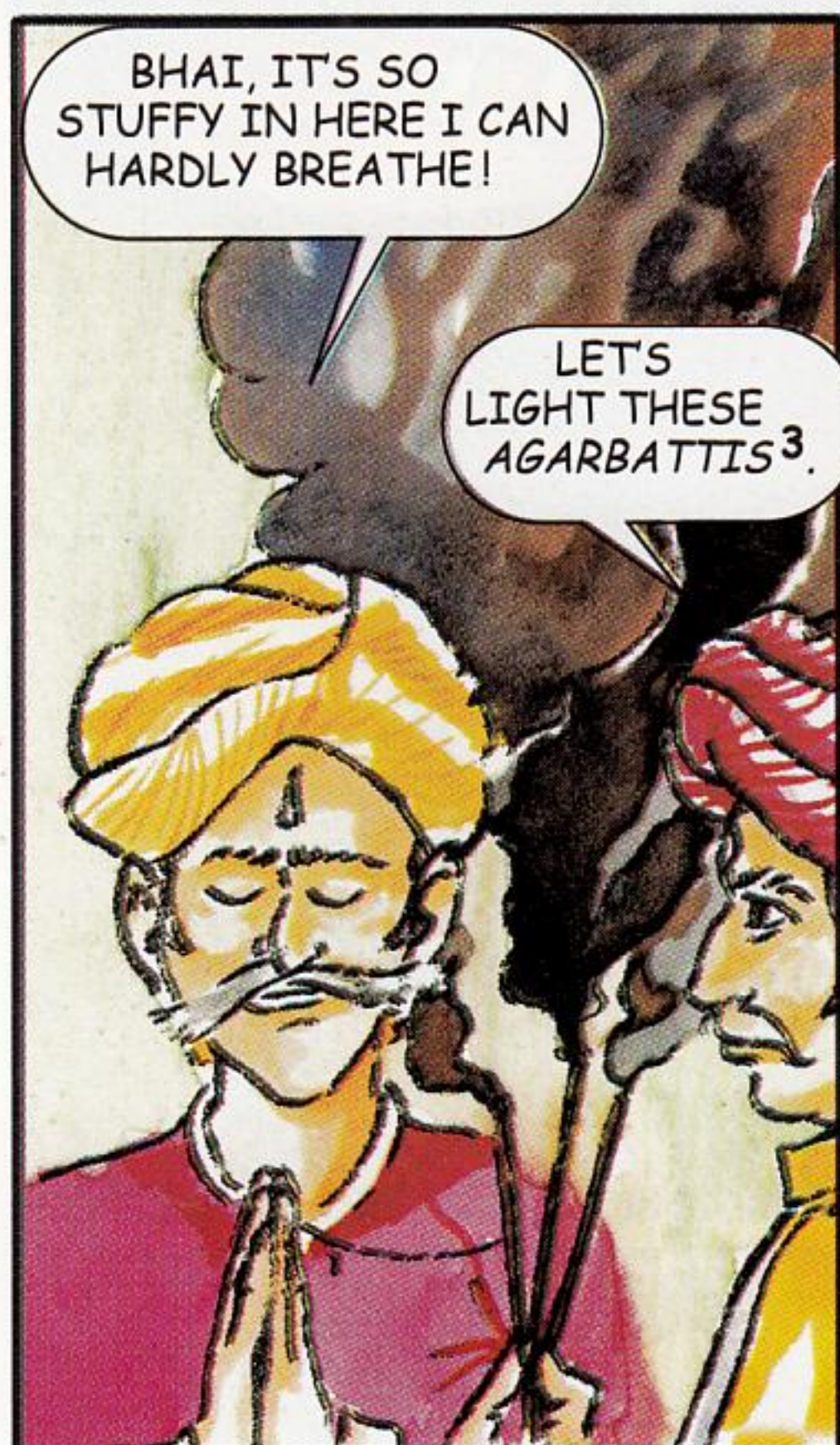
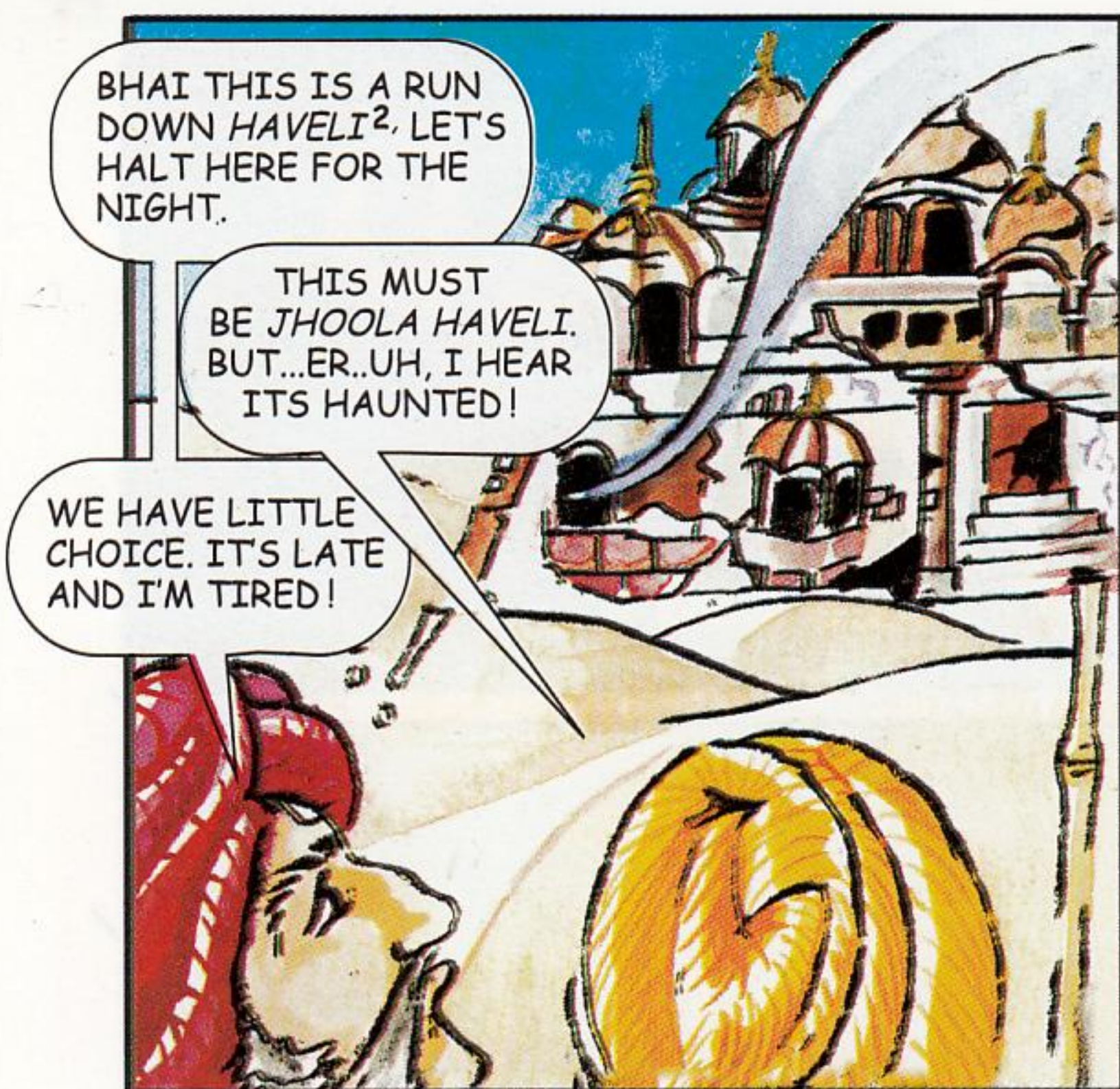


THAT IT WAS NOT DIFFICULT TO LOSE ONE'S WAY.



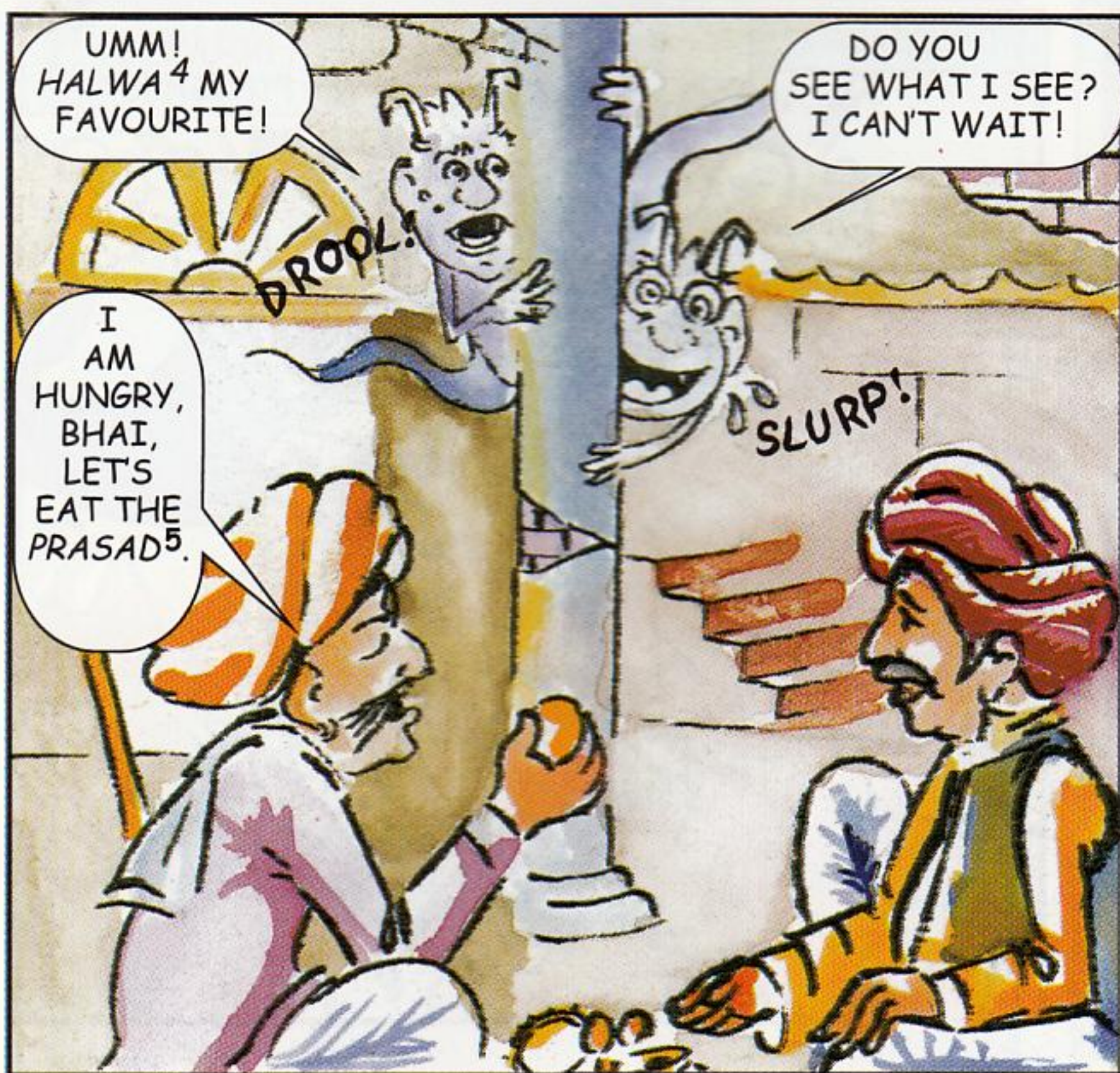
1. About a mile.





2.A rich person's mansion. 3.Incense sticks.





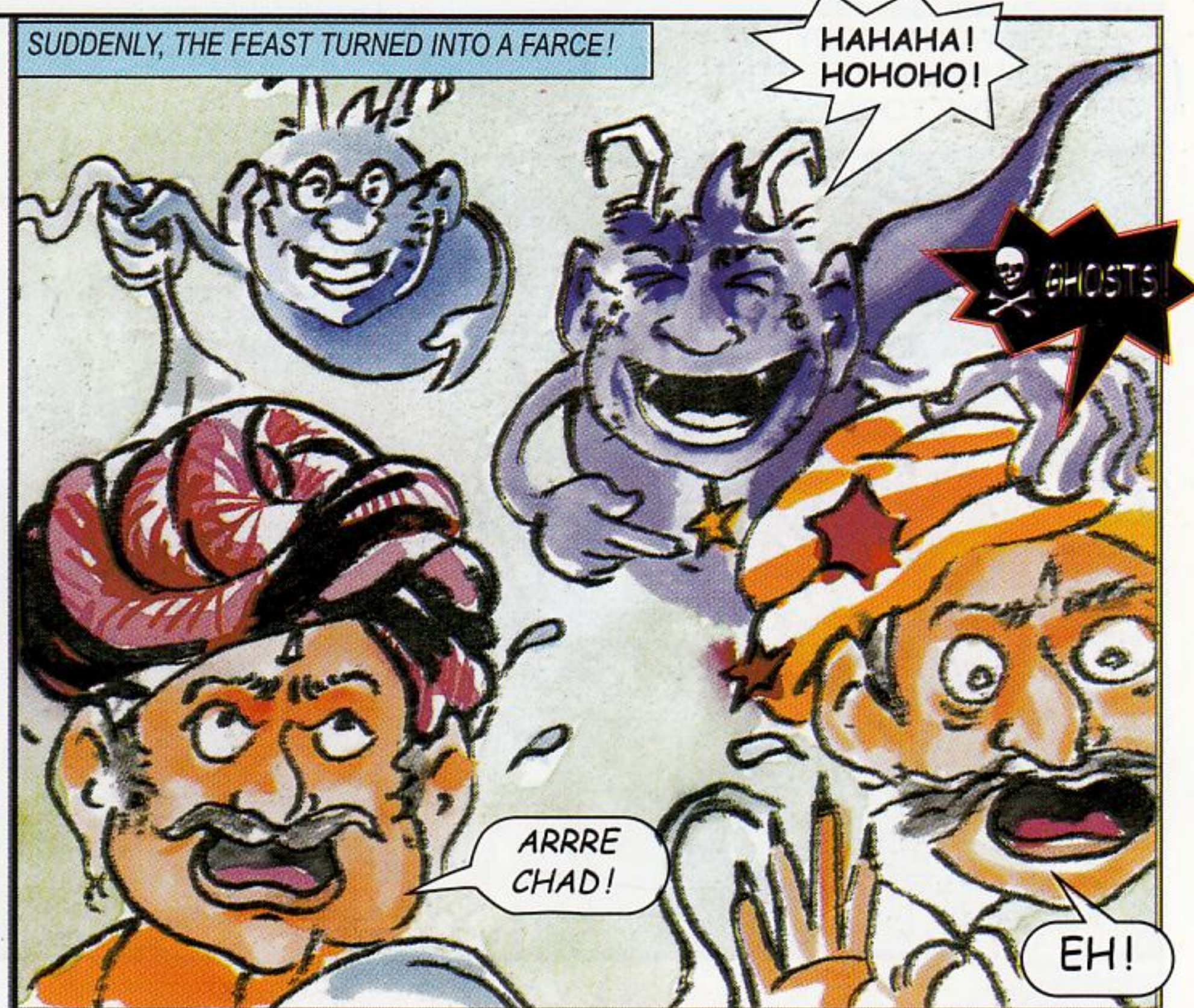
UMM! HALWA<sup>4</sup> MY FAVOURITE!

I AM HUNGRY, BHAI, LET'S EAT THE PRASAD<sup>5</sup>.

DROOL!

DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE? I CAN'T WAIT!

SLURP!



SUDDENLY, THE FEAST TURNED INTO A FARCE!

HAHAHA! HOHOHO!

EH!

ARRRE CHAD!



STOP IT! LEAVE US ALONE OR WE'LL RING THE TEMPLE BELL. DON'T SAY LATER THAT WE DIDN'T WARN YOU!

BUT BUT

I TOLD YOU TO STAY AWAY!



GRRR!

BOO!



HANG ON A MINUTE! YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE SCARED OF US! AFTER ALL WE'RE GHOSTS! JUST SHARE THE HALWA WITH US AND WE'LL LEAVE YOU ALONE.

SLURP!

VERY WELL!

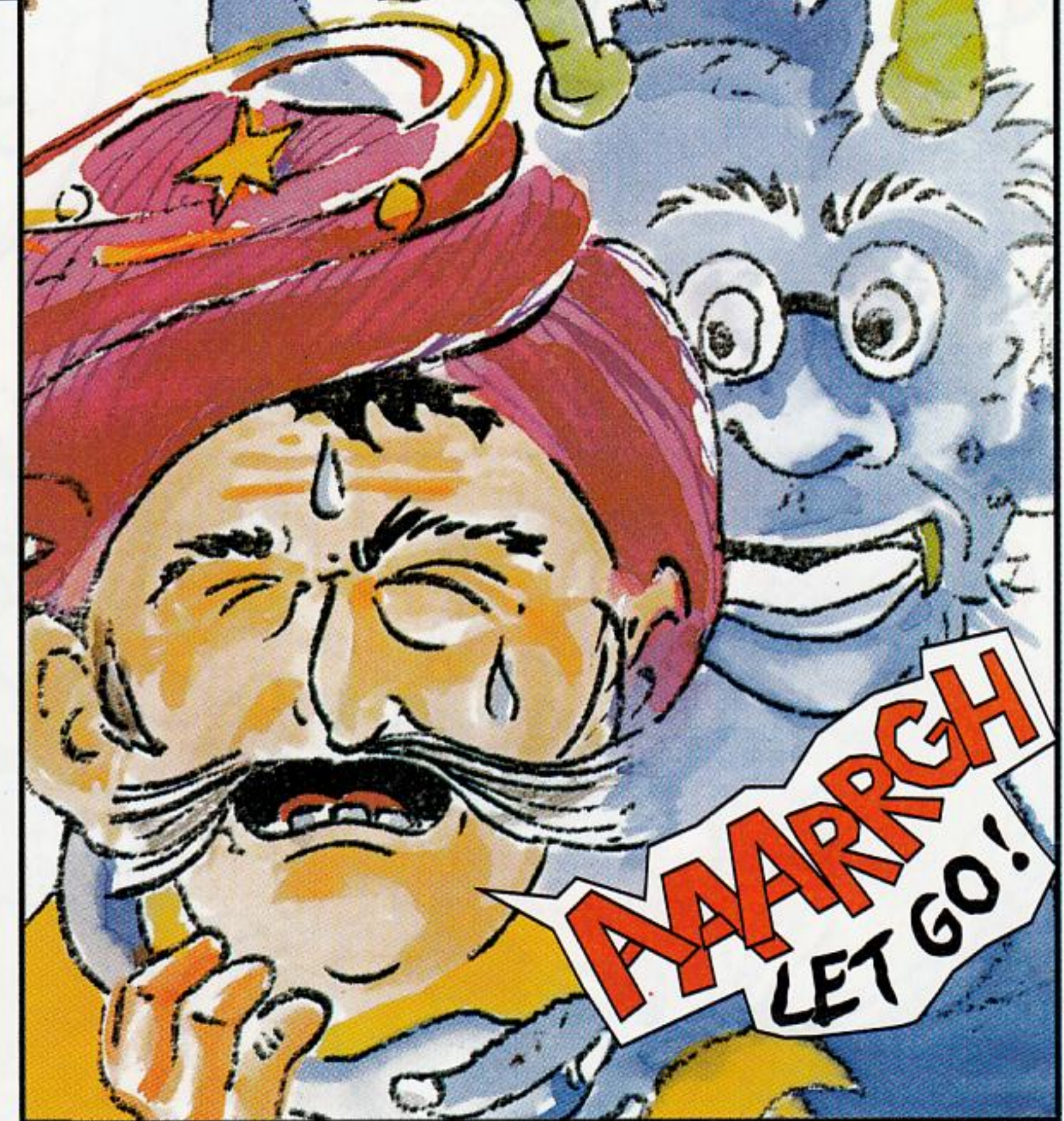
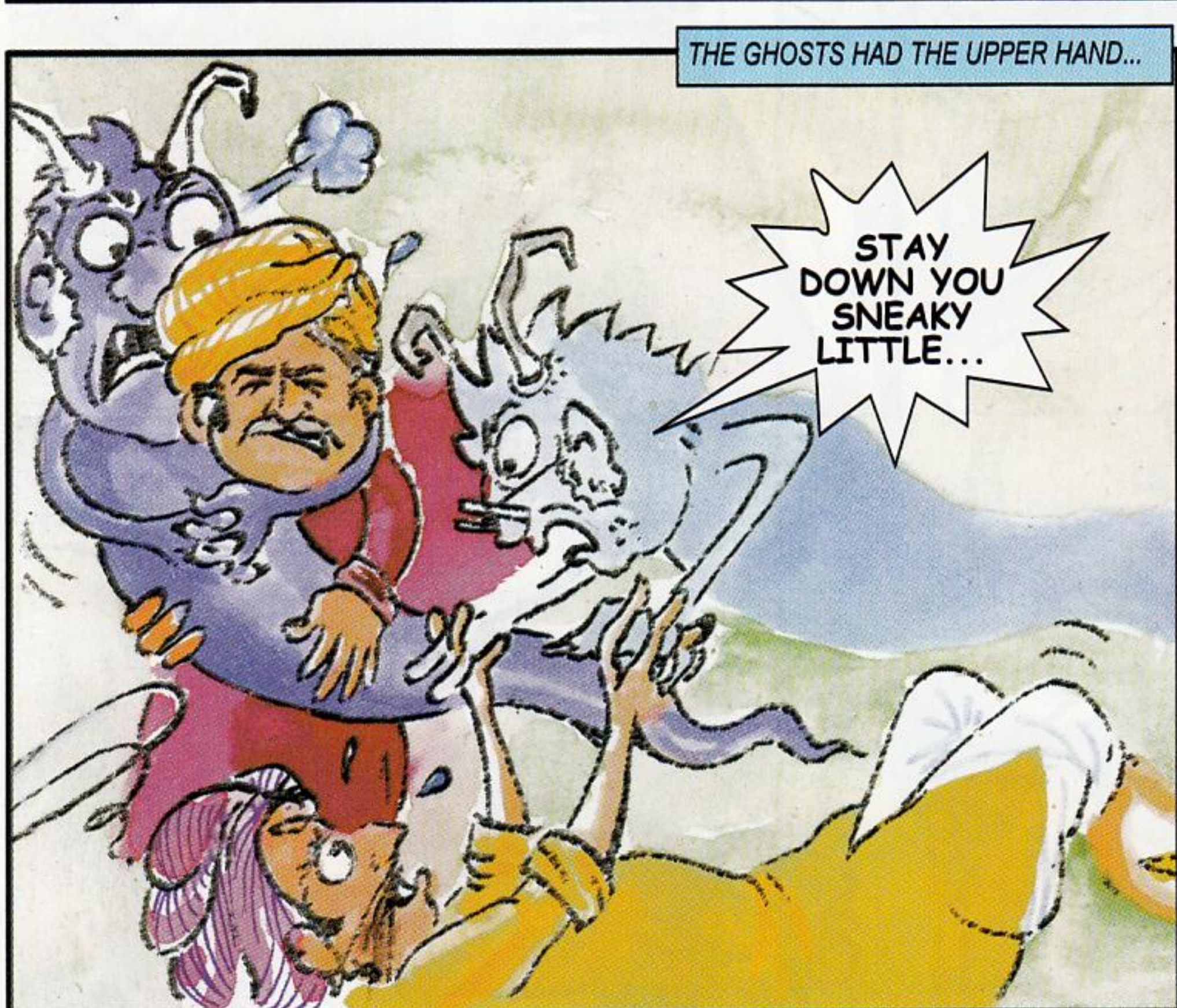
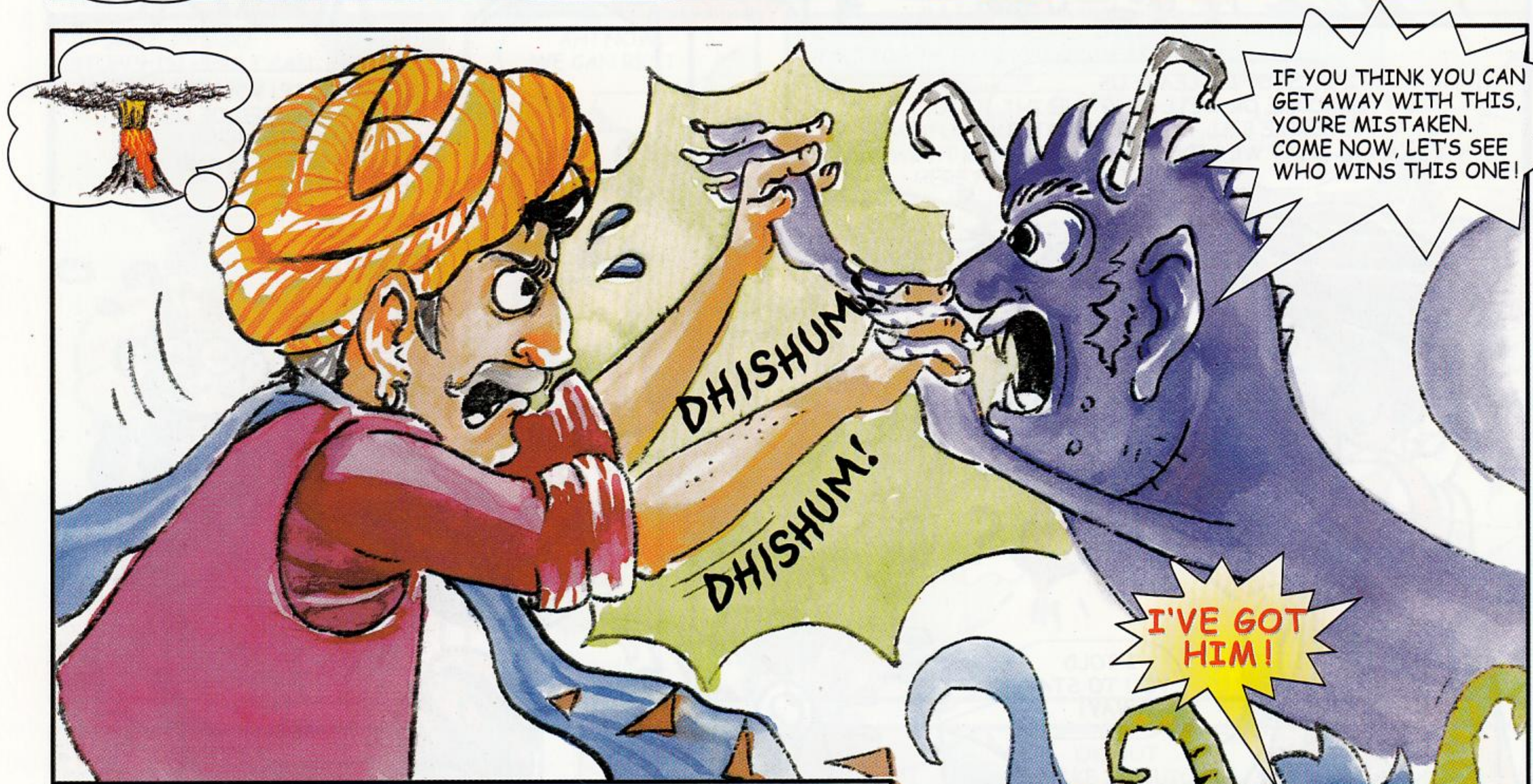
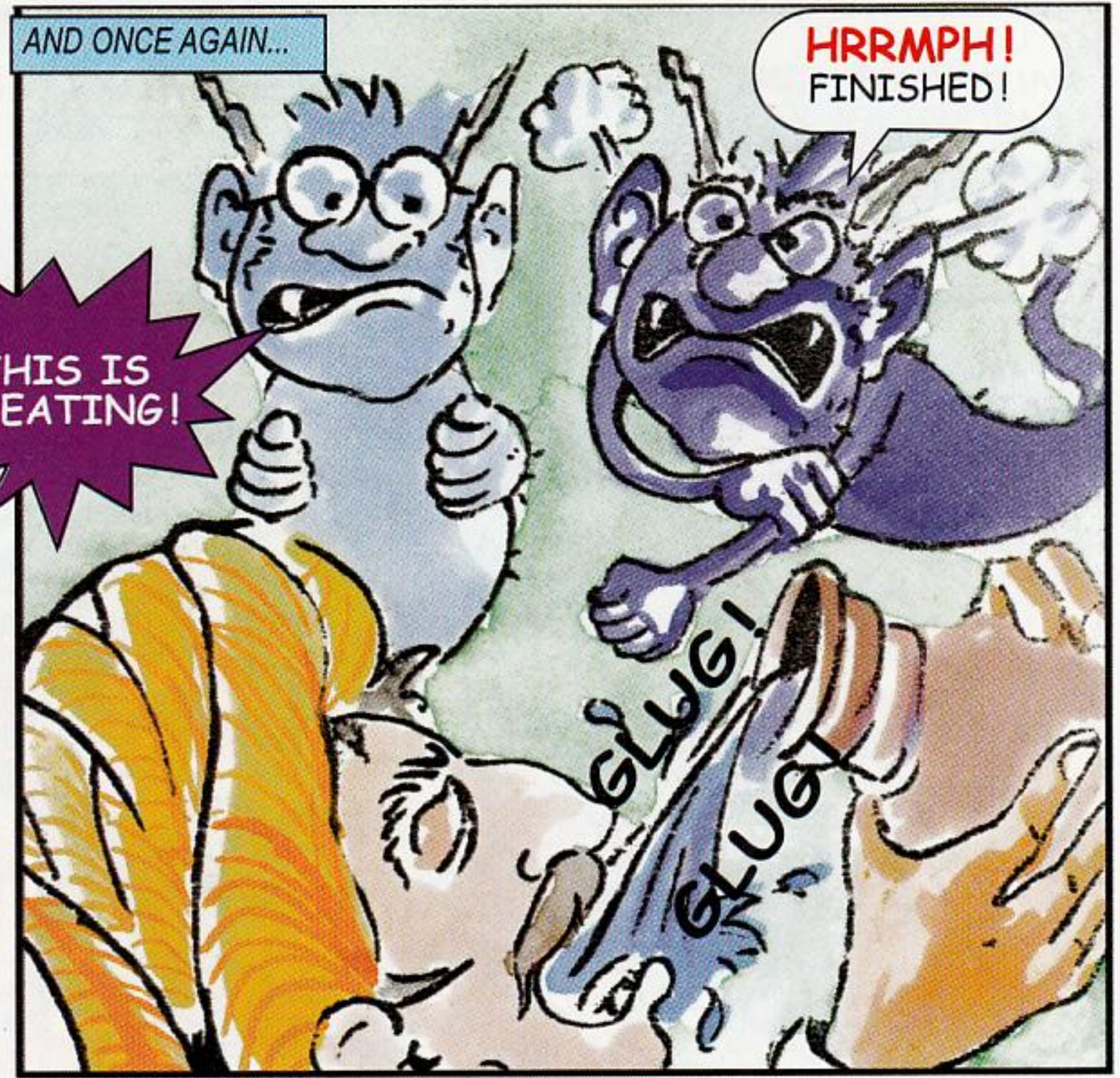
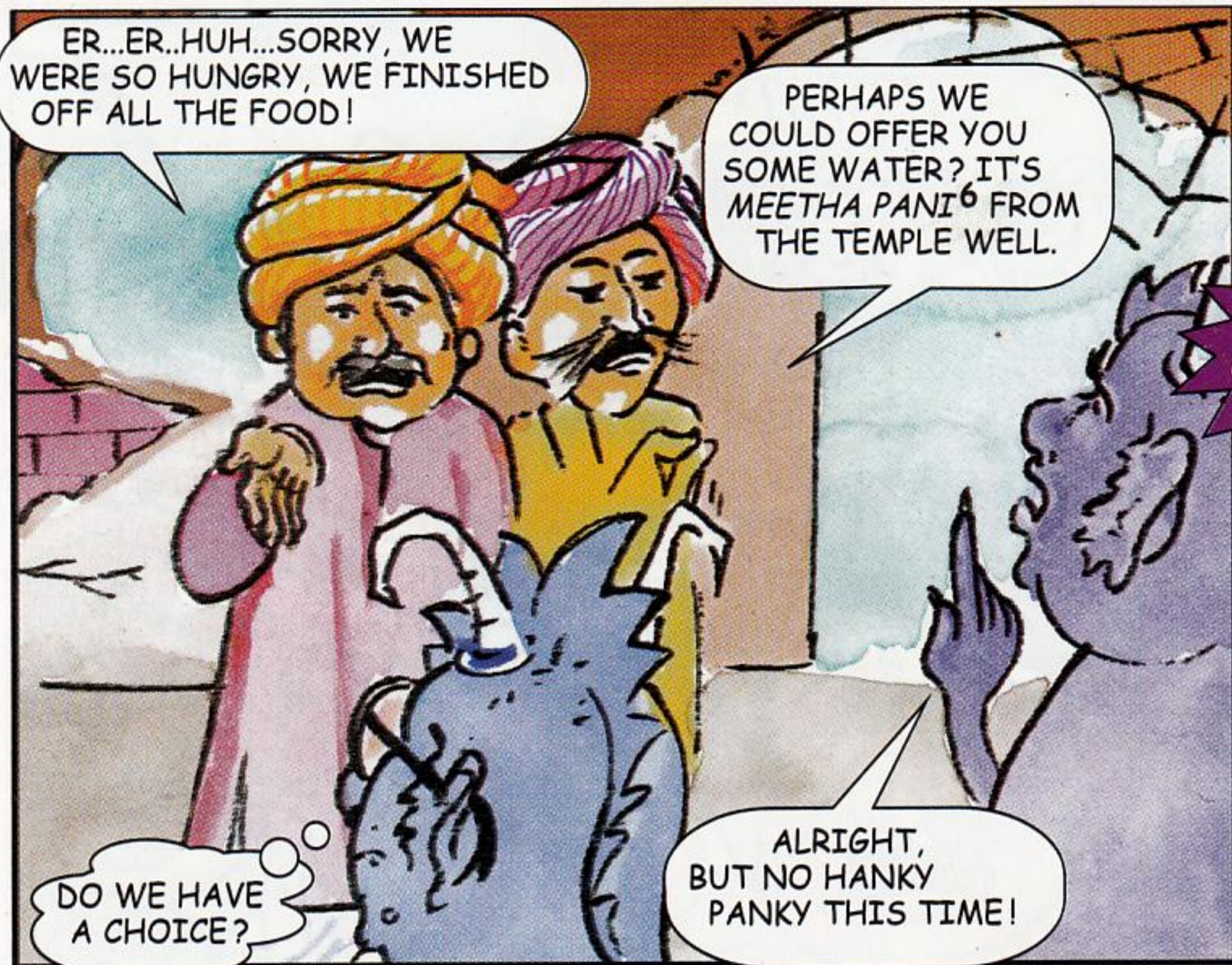
SHARE?

LISTEN, PSSST...

BUT THE BROTHERS HAD NO INTENTION OF SHARING THE FOOD! SOON IT ALL DISAPPEARED.

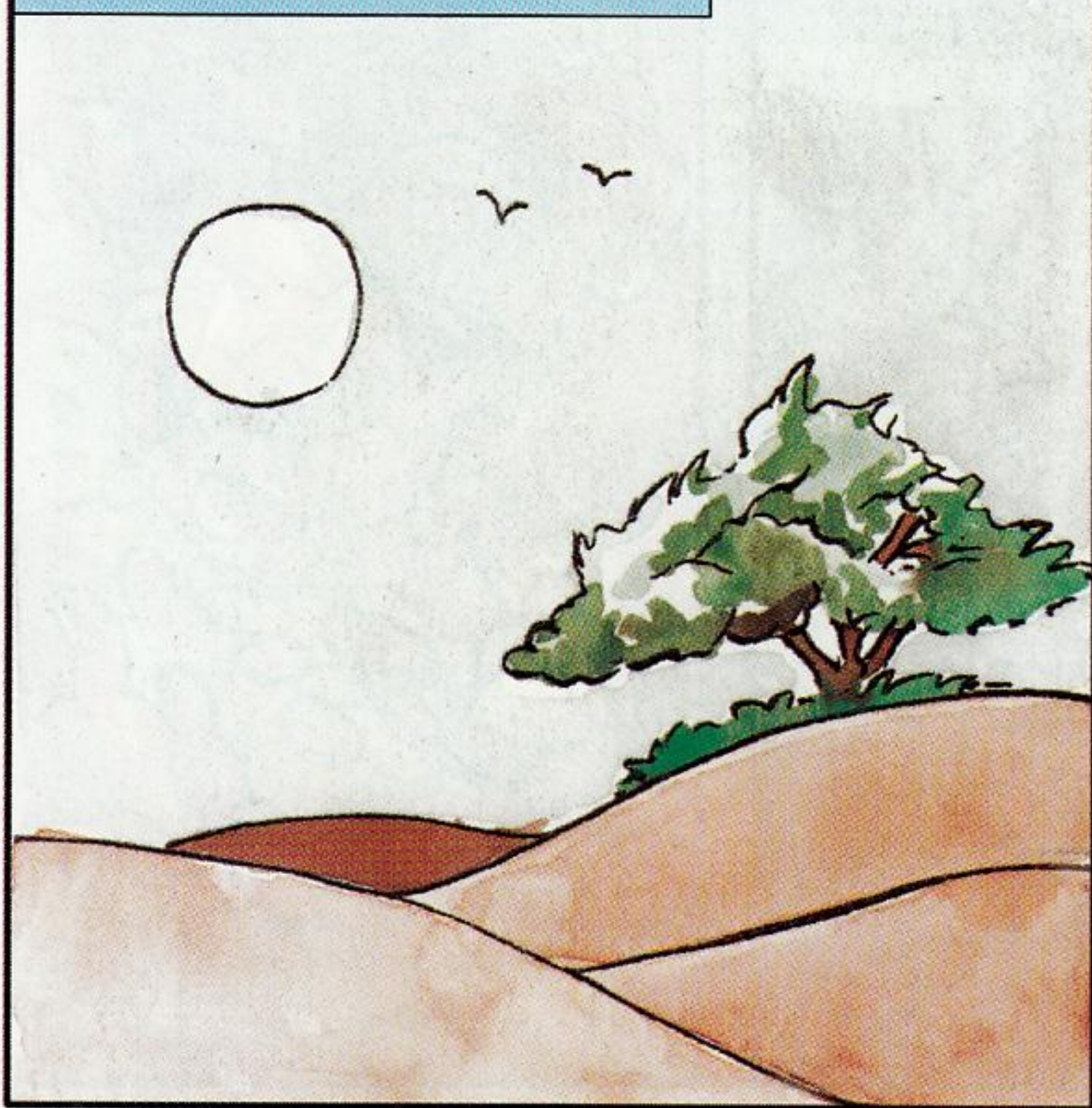
4.A sticky sweet. 5.Sanctified offering.



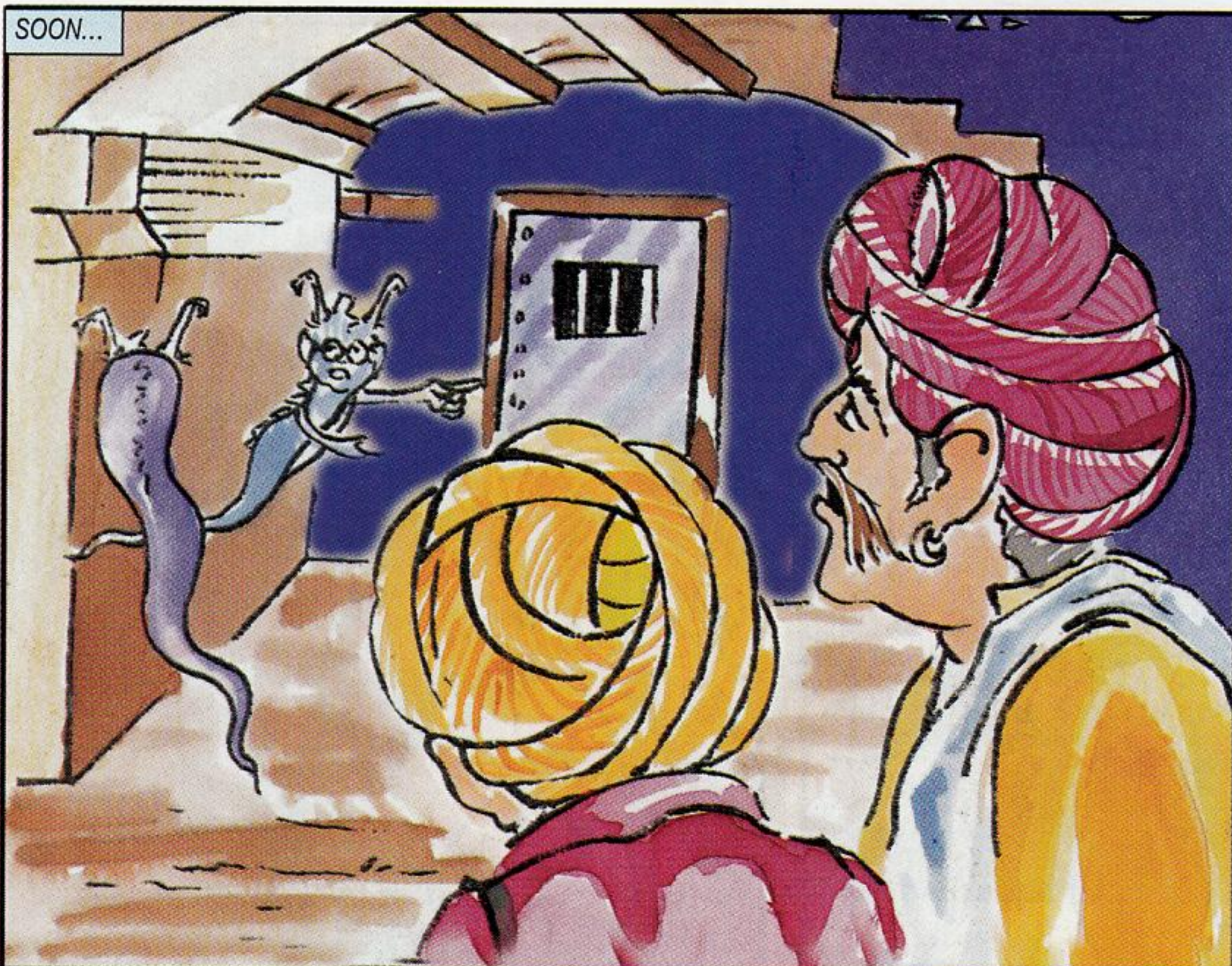
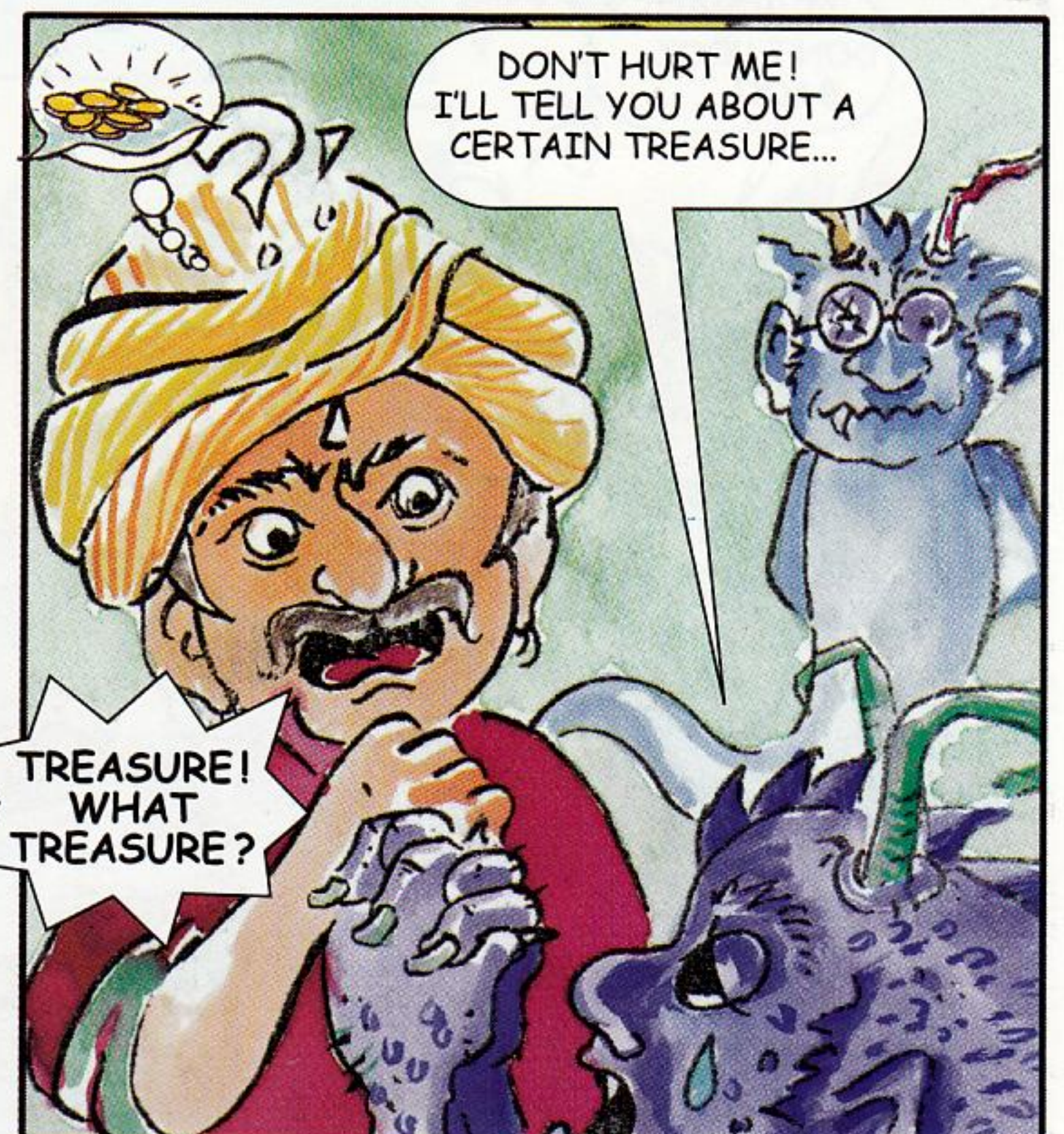
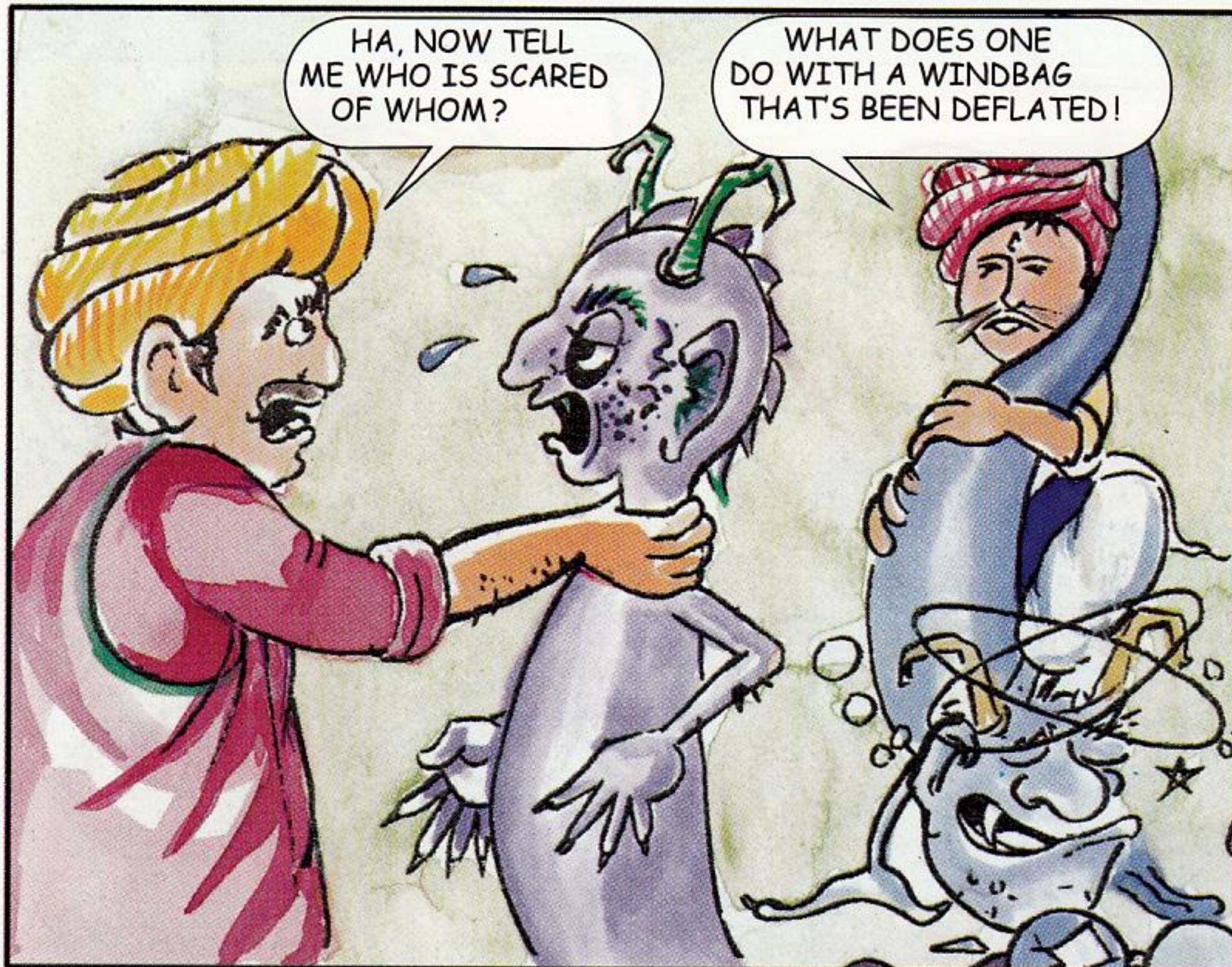
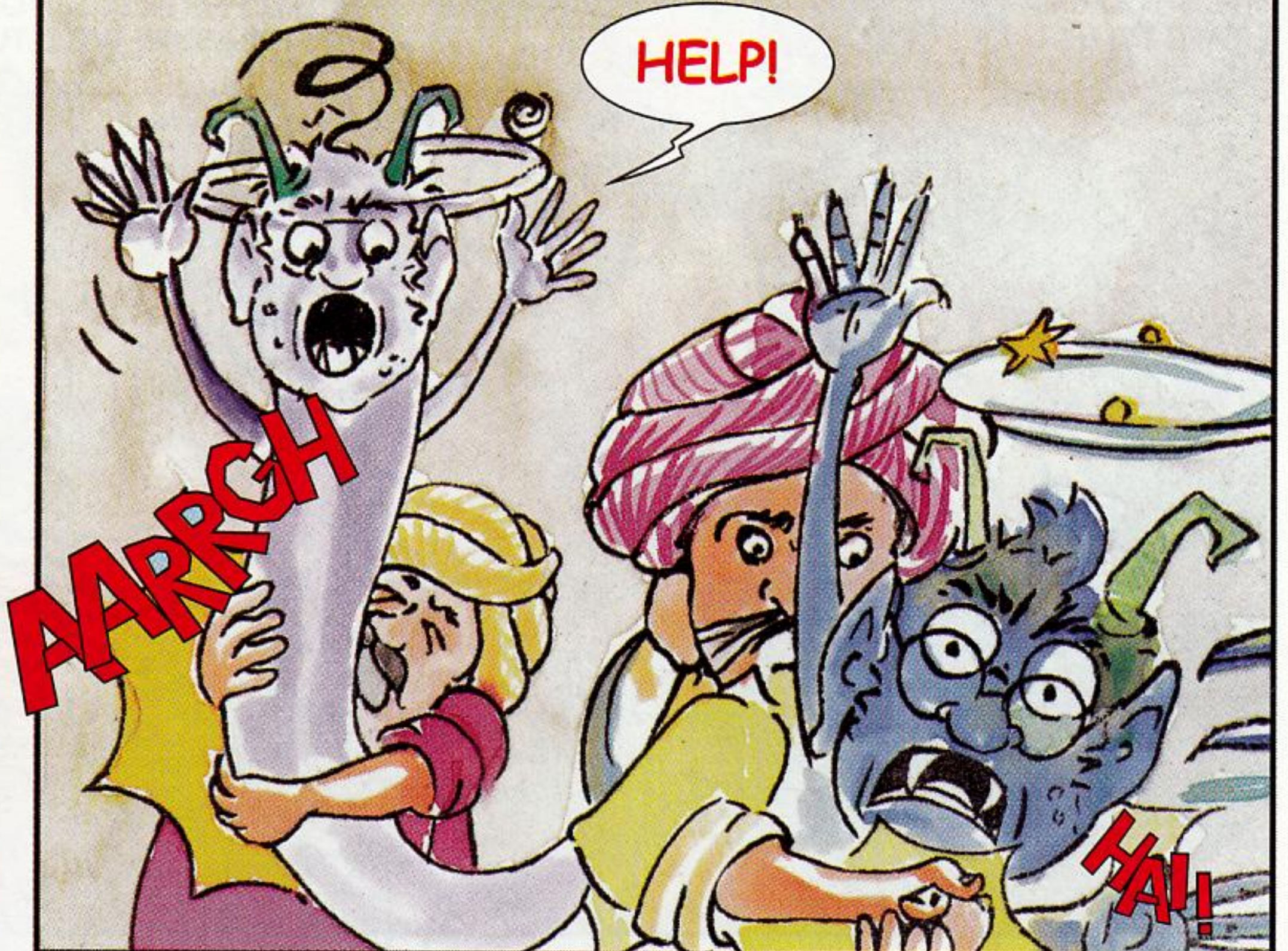




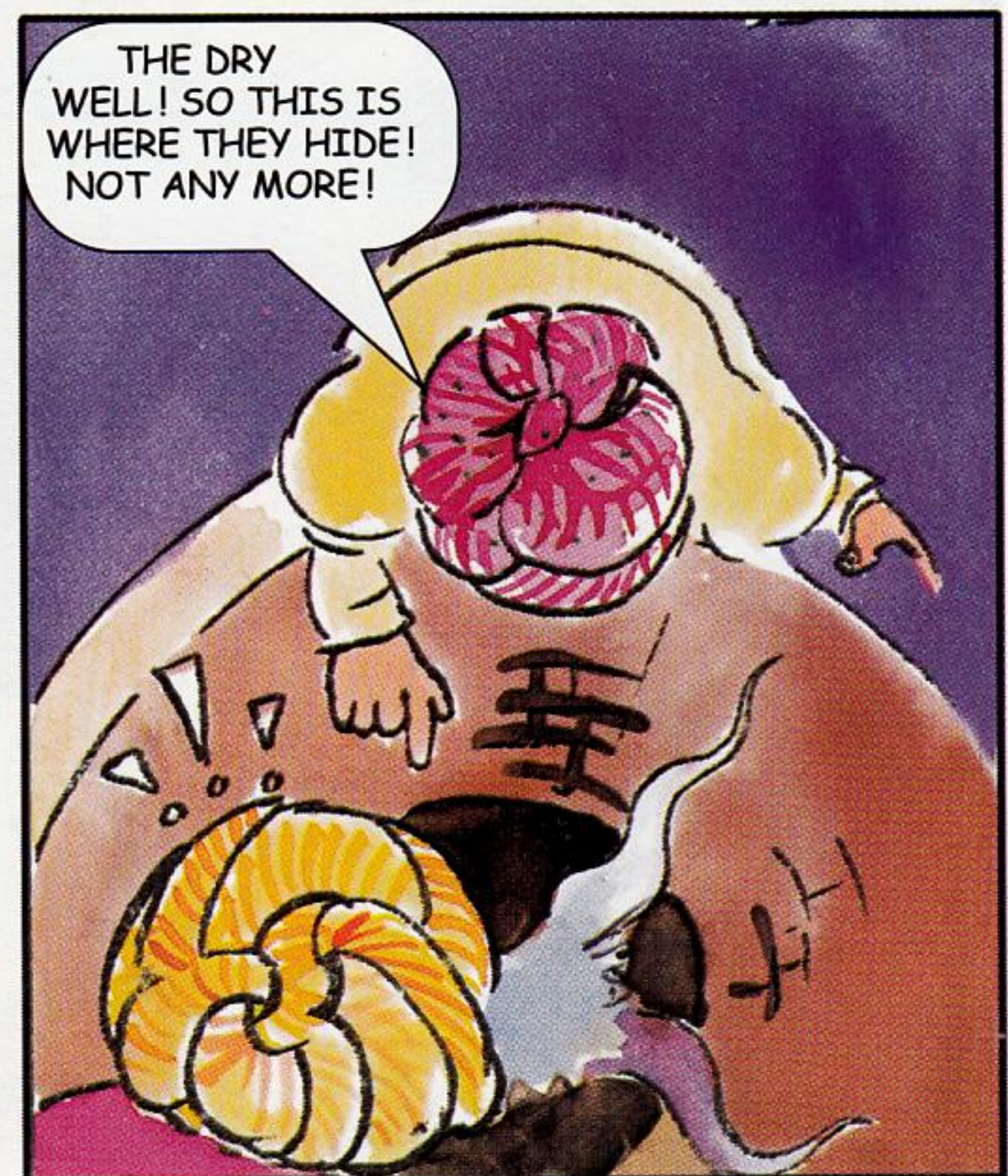
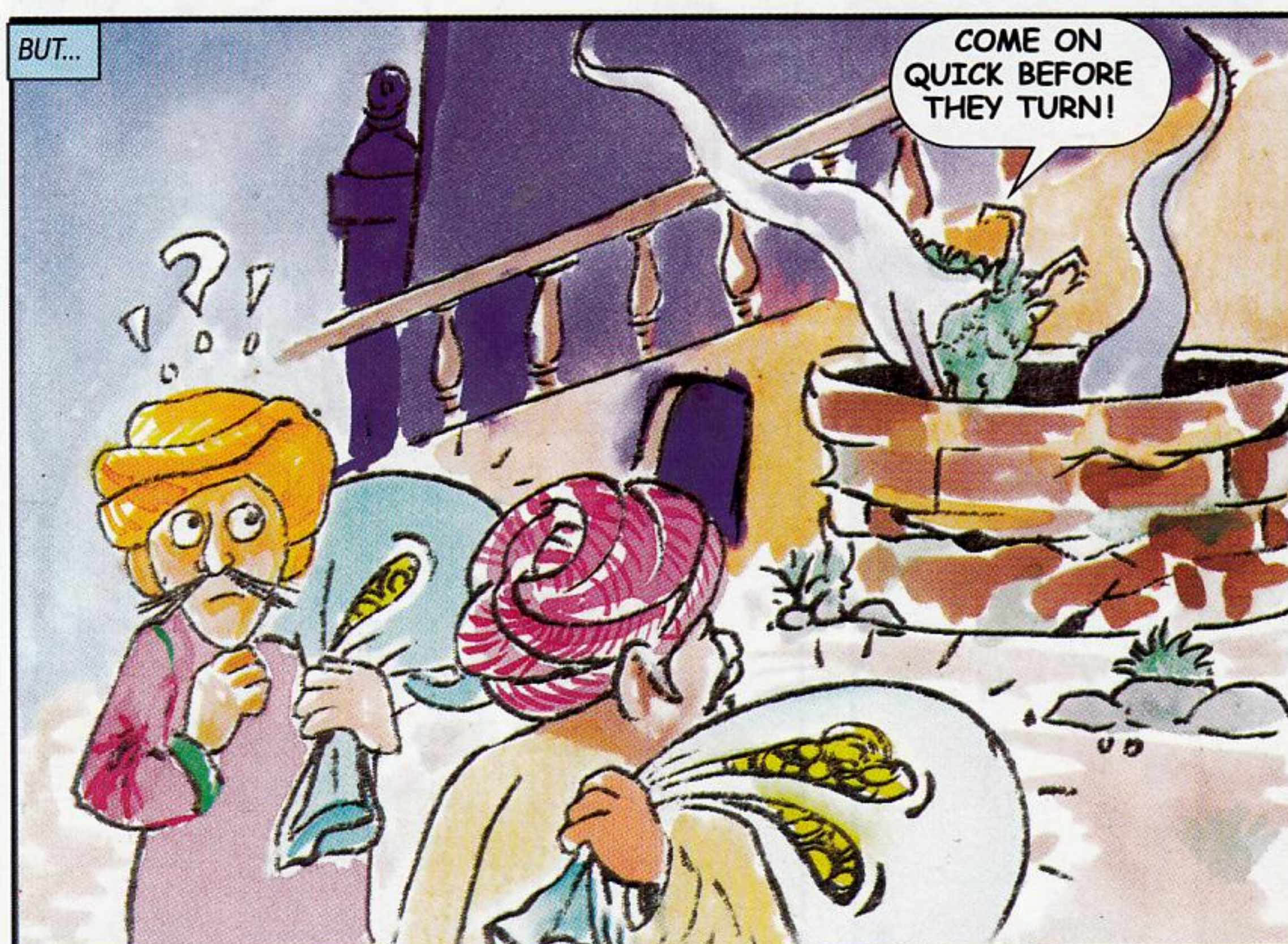
BUT COME DAWN, WITH THE CHIRPING OF BIRDS, THE GHOSTS LOST THEIR POWER.



NOW THE TABLES TURNED!









THE STONE SLAB LYING NEARBY, WHICH THEY THREW INTO THE WELL TURNED OUT TO BE THE SACRED GOVARDHAN SMARAK. 7

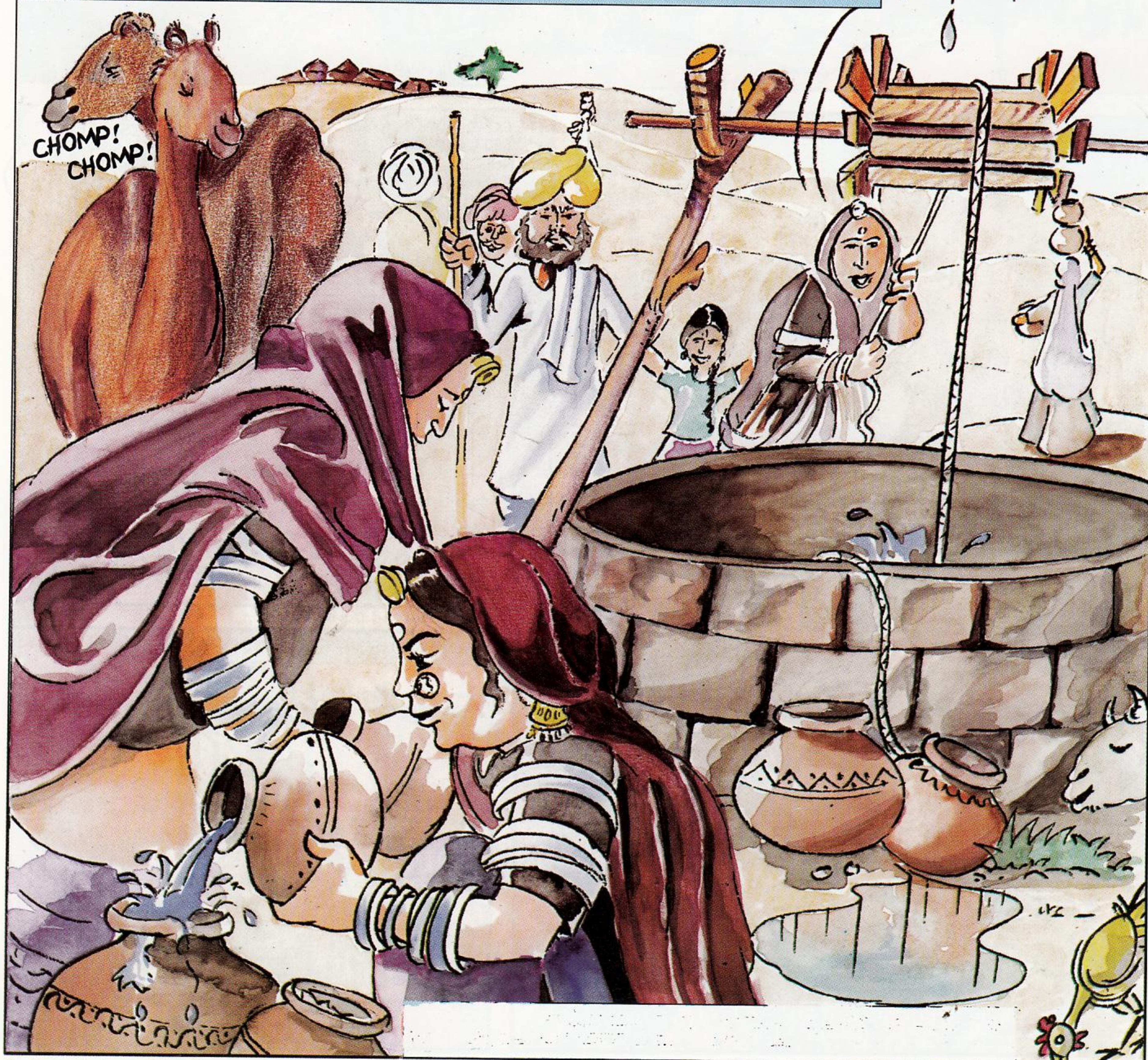
GOODBYE GHOSTS!

THE GHOSTS VANISHED AND SUDDENLY THE DRY WELL WAS BRIMMING WITH WATER.

AAARRGH!

THE HAVELI WAS HAUNTED NO MORE...

CHOMP!  
CHOMP!



7. Sacred stone pillars for cow worship



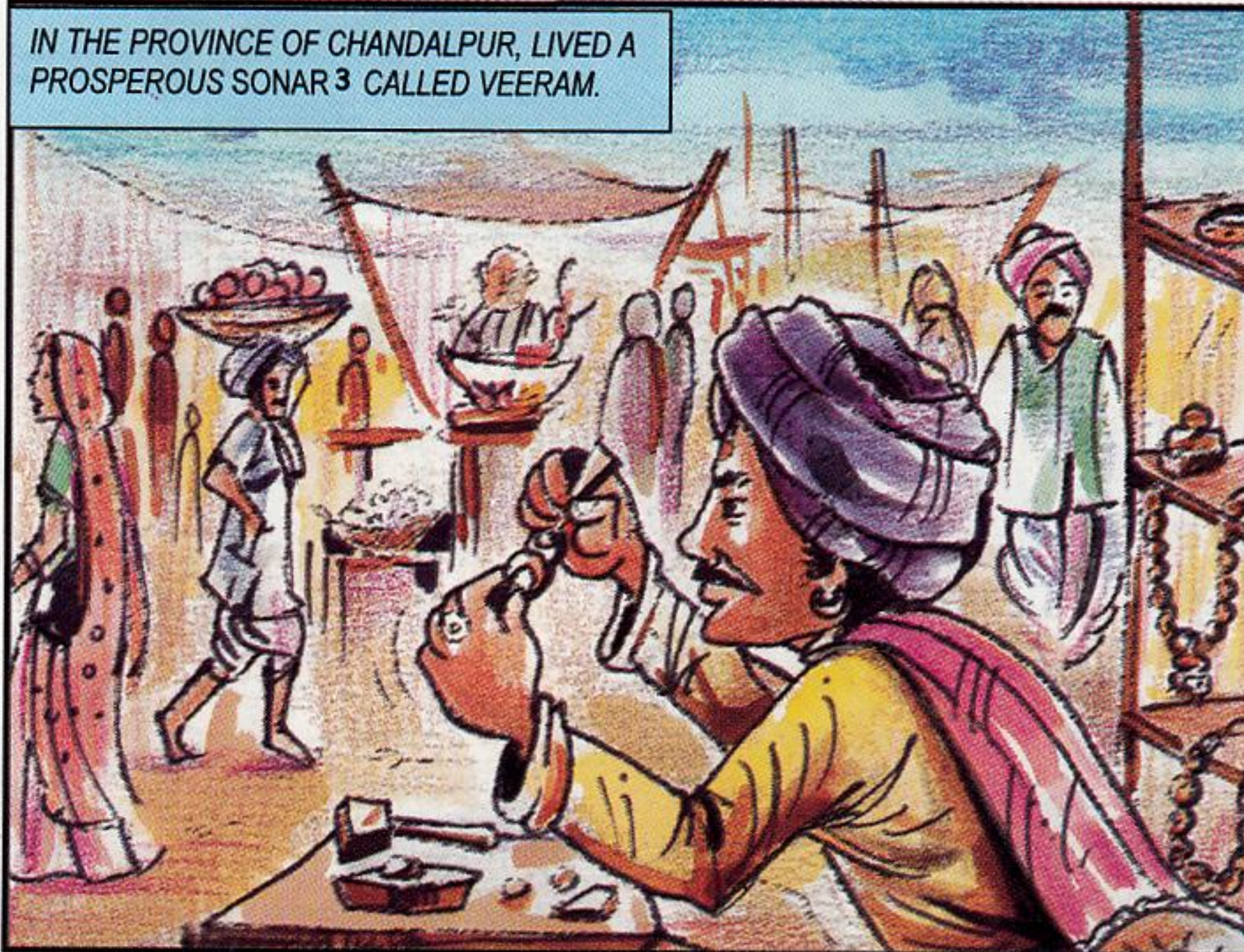


# The Clever Women

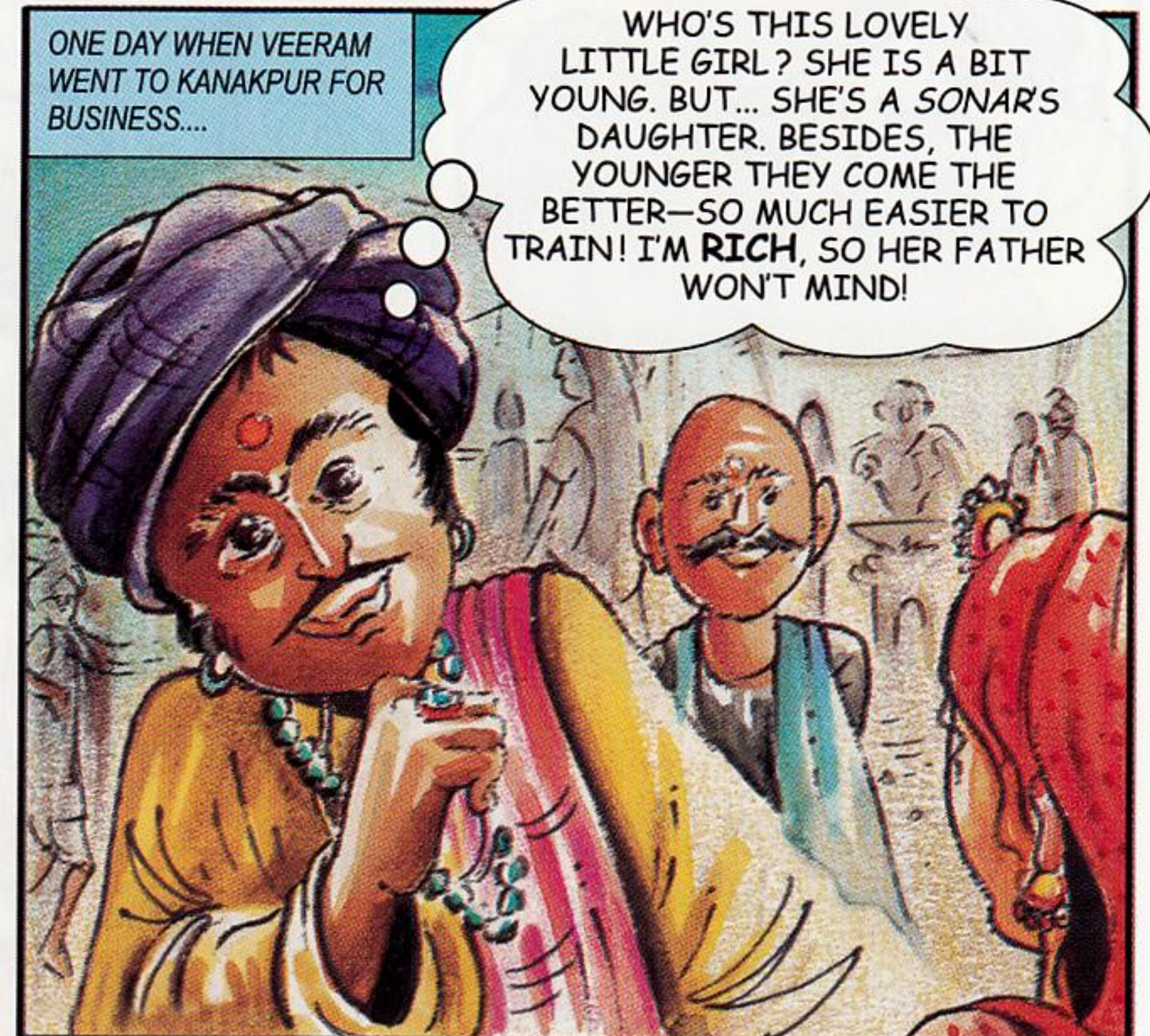
KING VIKRAMADITYA'S COURT. THE CHARAN BHATS<sup>1</sup> HAD JUST FINISHED SINGING *THE BIRAD*, SONGS BASED ON ROYAL HISTORY. THEN THE KING'S PET SUVA CLEARED HIS THROAT AND BEGAN TO TELL A STORY FROM THE *MADAN MANJARI*.<sup>2</sup>



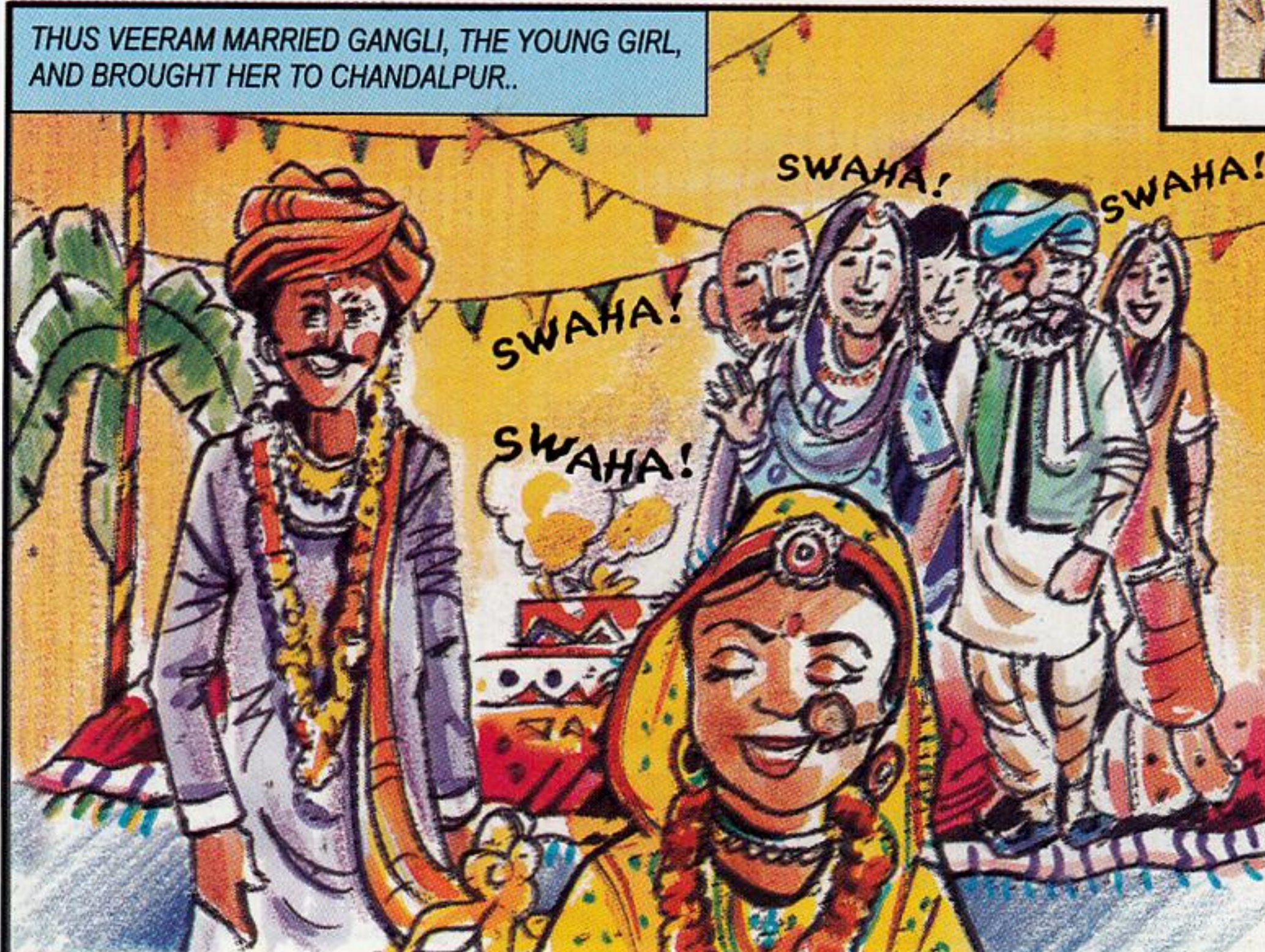
IN THE PROVINCE OF CHANDALPUR, LIVED A PROSPEROUS SONAR<sup>3</sup> CALLED VEERAM.



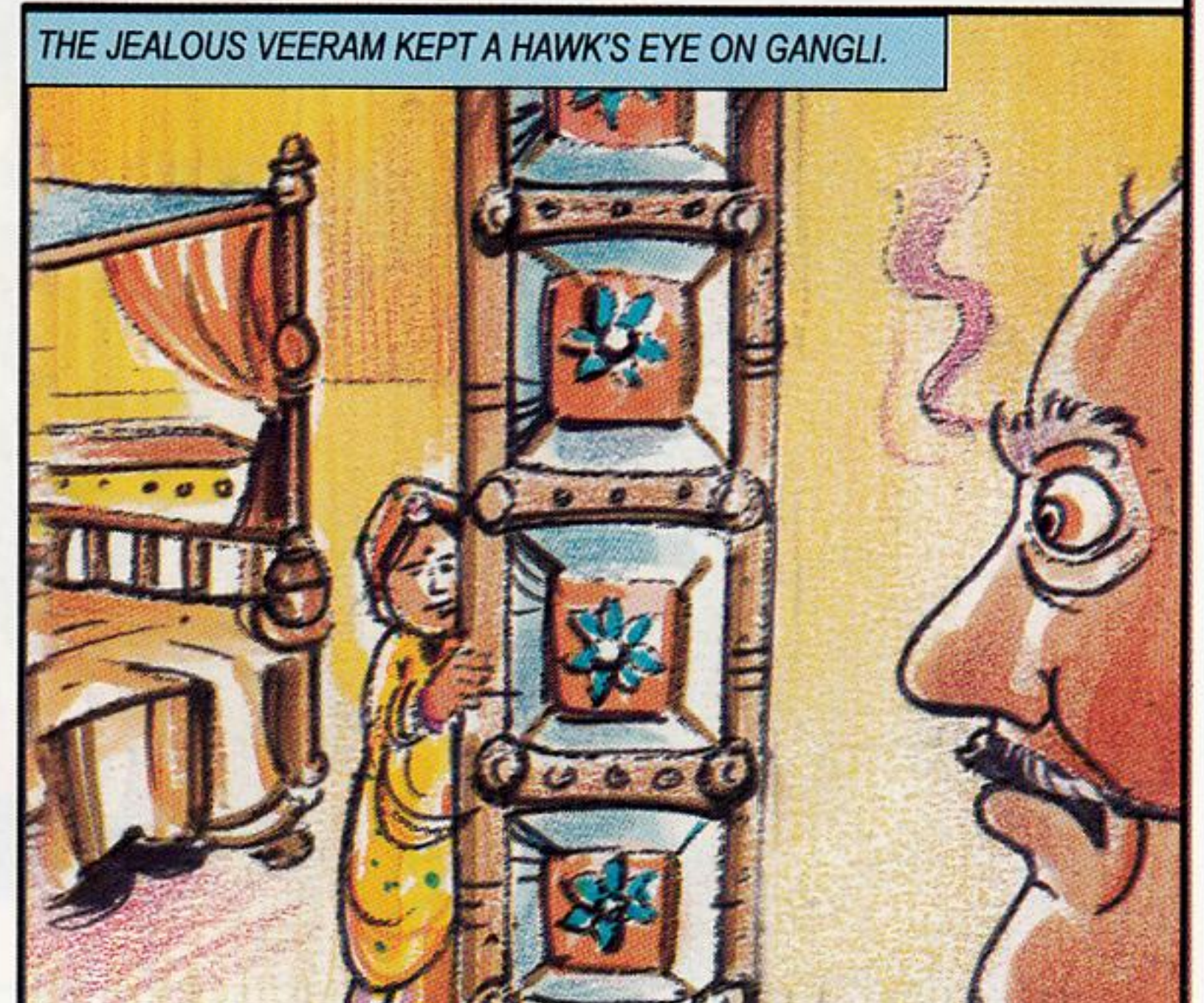
ONE DAY WHEN VEERAM WENT TO KANAKPUR FOR BUSINESS....



THUS VEERAM MARRIED GANGLI, THE YOUNG GIRL, AND BROUGHT HER TO CHANDALPUR..



THE JEALOUS VEERAM KEPT A HAWK'S EYE ON GANGLI.



1. Bards and geneologists 2. A collection of erotic tales. 3. Jeweller.



SO JEALOUS THAT...

AND WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING, STANDING AT THE DOOR?! **DON'T YOU EVER STEP OUT OR INVITE ANYONE IN!** I'LL THRASH EVERY INCH OF YOU IF YOU SO MUCH AS LOOK OUT OF THE WINDOW!

BUT TIME DOESN'T STAND STILL. MANY MOONS PASSED AND YOUNG GANGLI GREW UP TO BE A BEAUTIFUL MAIDEN OF SIXTEEN. SHE WAS STILL HER HUSBAND'S PRISONER.

I WONDER IF THIS IS THE FATE OF ALL YOUNG WOMEN!

VEERAM POSSESSES ME BUT HE DOESN'T LOVE ME. I WISH SOME DEMON WOULD COME AND PUT MY RESTLESS SPIRIT TO DEATH! I CAN'T BEAR IT ANYMORE!

ONE DAY WHEN VEERAM WAS AWAY...

GANGLI, SSSHH! I AM NAINI, YOUR NEIGHBOUR! I SAW YOUR HUSBAND LEAVE, SO I TOOK THE CHANCE...

UHHHH...

O, WHAT BEAUTY! THAT LOUSY LOUT DOESN'T DESERVE YOU, NOR ALL THE OTHERS HE HAS **DUMPED!**

DON'T YOU KNOW, THE SIXTEEN WIVES HE ABANDONED SAYING THEY WERE ALL LOOSE AND UNFAITHFUL?! **MAY HE ROT IN HELL!**

WHAT OTHERS?

BUT LISTEN, I CAN'T STAY. LET ME RUN BEFORE HE CATCHES ME HERE!

**WAIT!** BEFORE YOU GO, TELL ME WHO IS THE **DOOTI**<sup>4</sup> OF THIS VILLAGE.

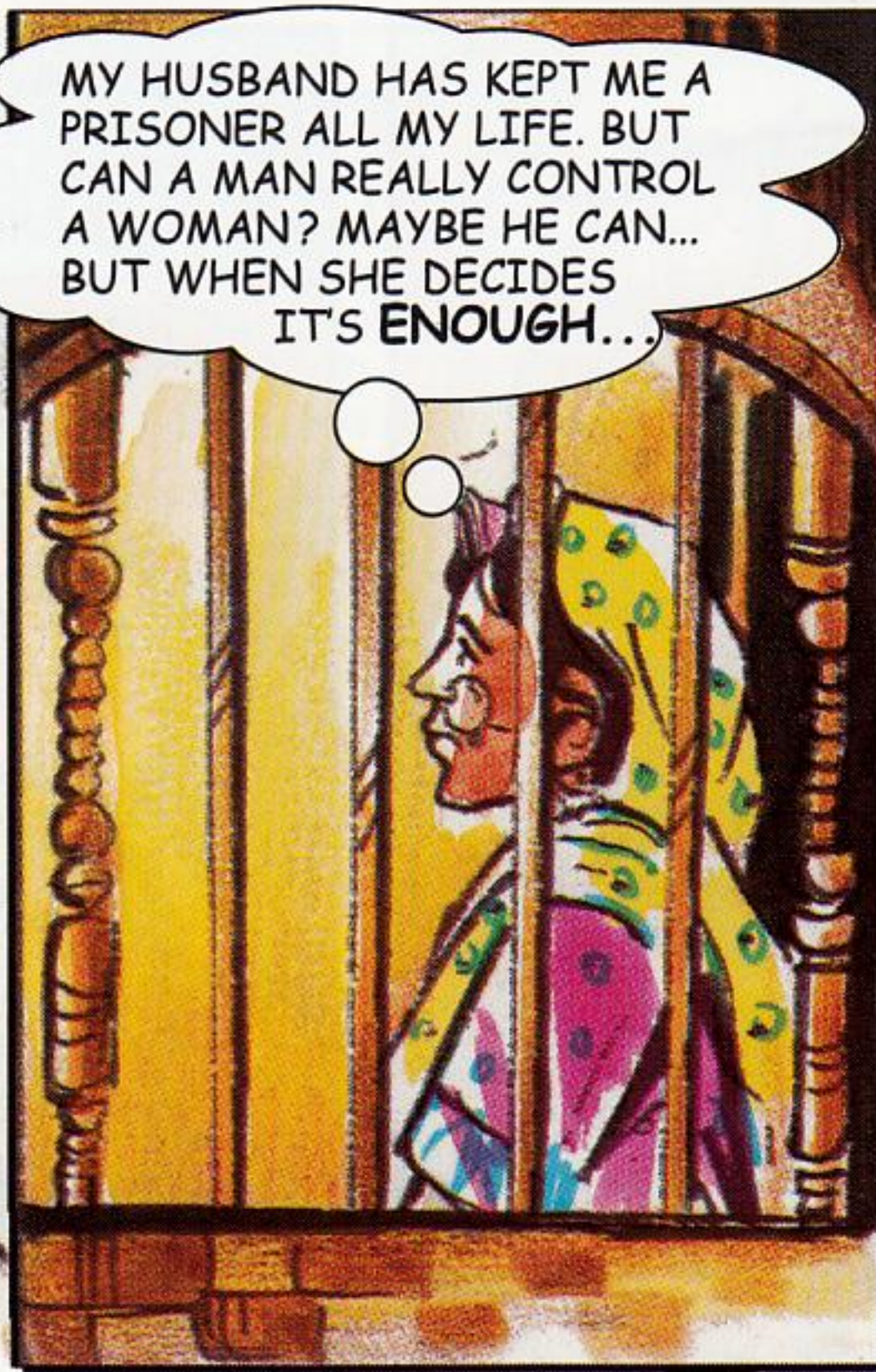
4. An old wise woman who gives messages and excels in many local skills.



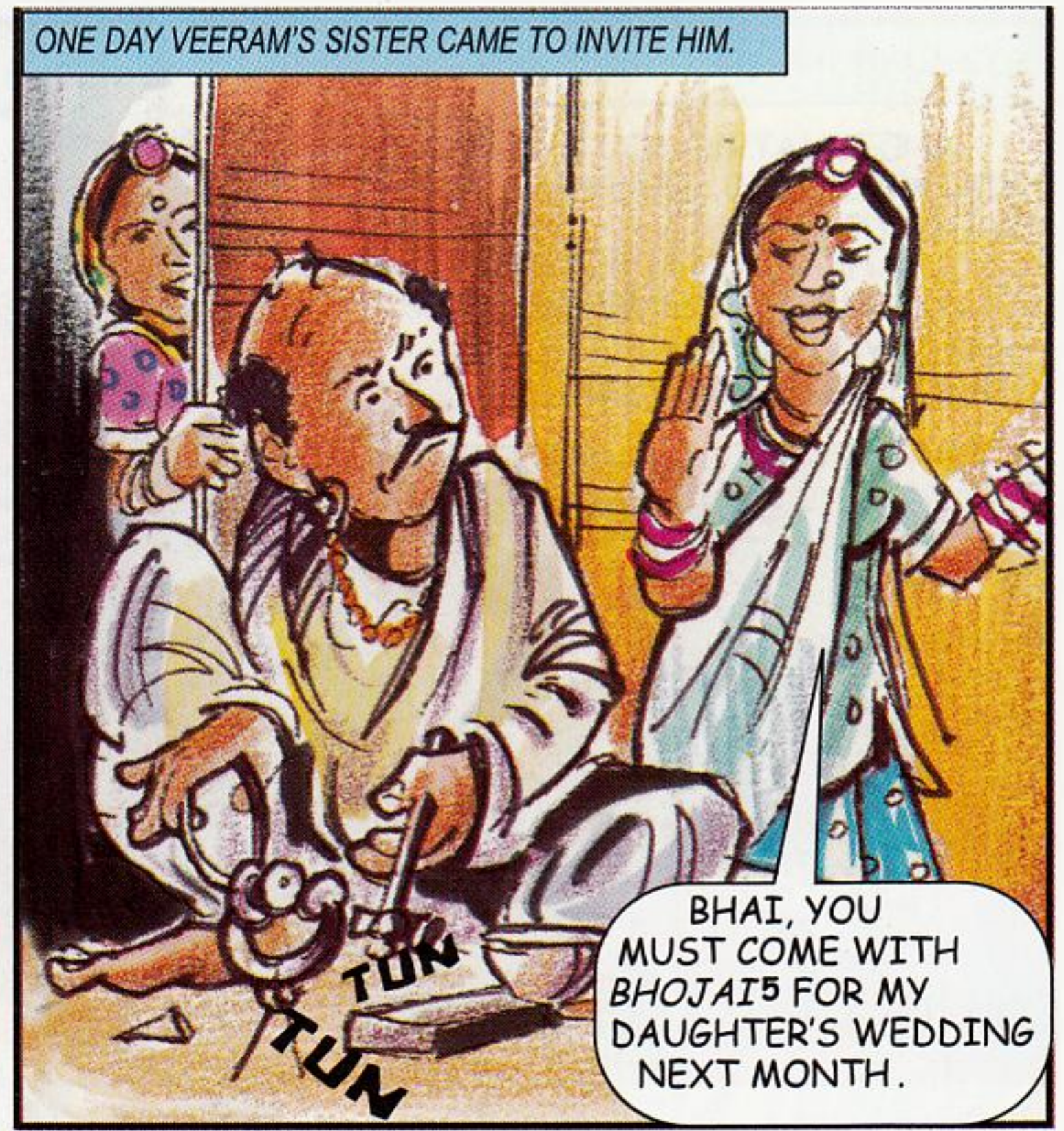
SARUFFA!



MY HUSBAND HAS KEPT ME A PRISONER ALL MY LIFE. BUT CAN A MAN REALLY CONTROL A WOMAN? MAYBE HE CAN... BUT WHEN SHE DECIDES IT'S ENOUGH...

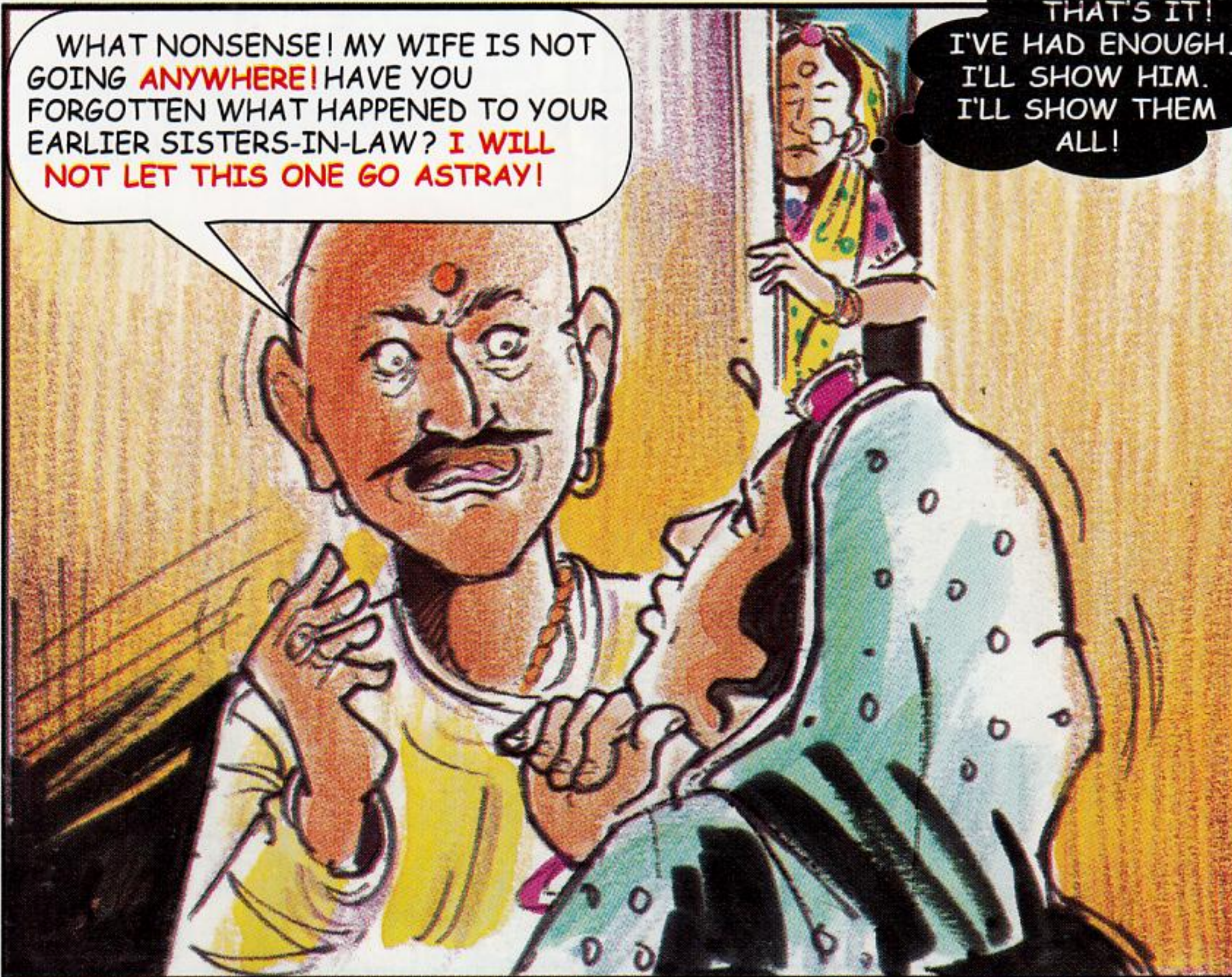


ONE DAY VEERAM'S SISTER CAME TO INVITE HIM.



BHAI, YOU MUST COME WITH BHOJAI<sup>5</sup> FOR MY DAUGHTER'S WEDDING NEXT MONTH.

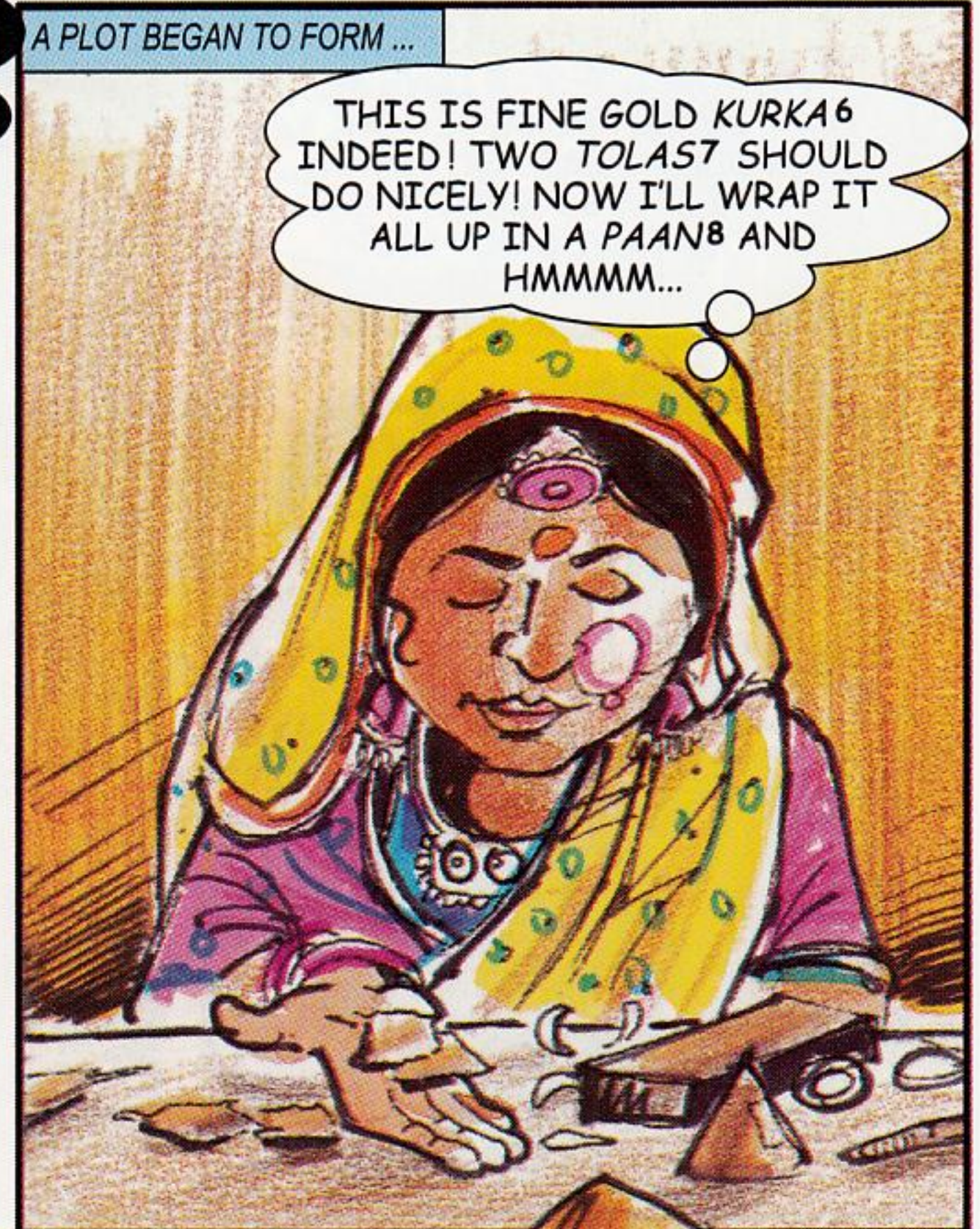
WHAT NONSENSE! MY WIFE IS NOT GOING **ANYWHERE**! HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR EARLIER SISTERS-IN-LAW? **I WILL NOT LET THIS ONE GO ASTRAY!**



THAT'S IT! I'VE HAD ENOUGH. I'LL SHOW HIM. I'LL SHOW THEM ALL!

A PLOT BEGAN TO FORM ...

THIS IS FINE GOLD KURKA<sup>6</sup> INDEED! TWO TOLAS<sup>7</sup> SHOULD DO NICELY! NOW I'LL WRAP IT ALL UP IN A PAAN<sup>8</sup> AND HMMMM...



THE NEXT DAY WHEN NO ONE WAS HOME... GANGLI WAITED AT THE JHAROKHA...

NICE... NOT NICE... NICE... NOT NICE... AAH! WHO'S THAT? WHAT A FINE LOOKING YOUNG MAN! I FEEL... BUT FIRST MY PLAN...



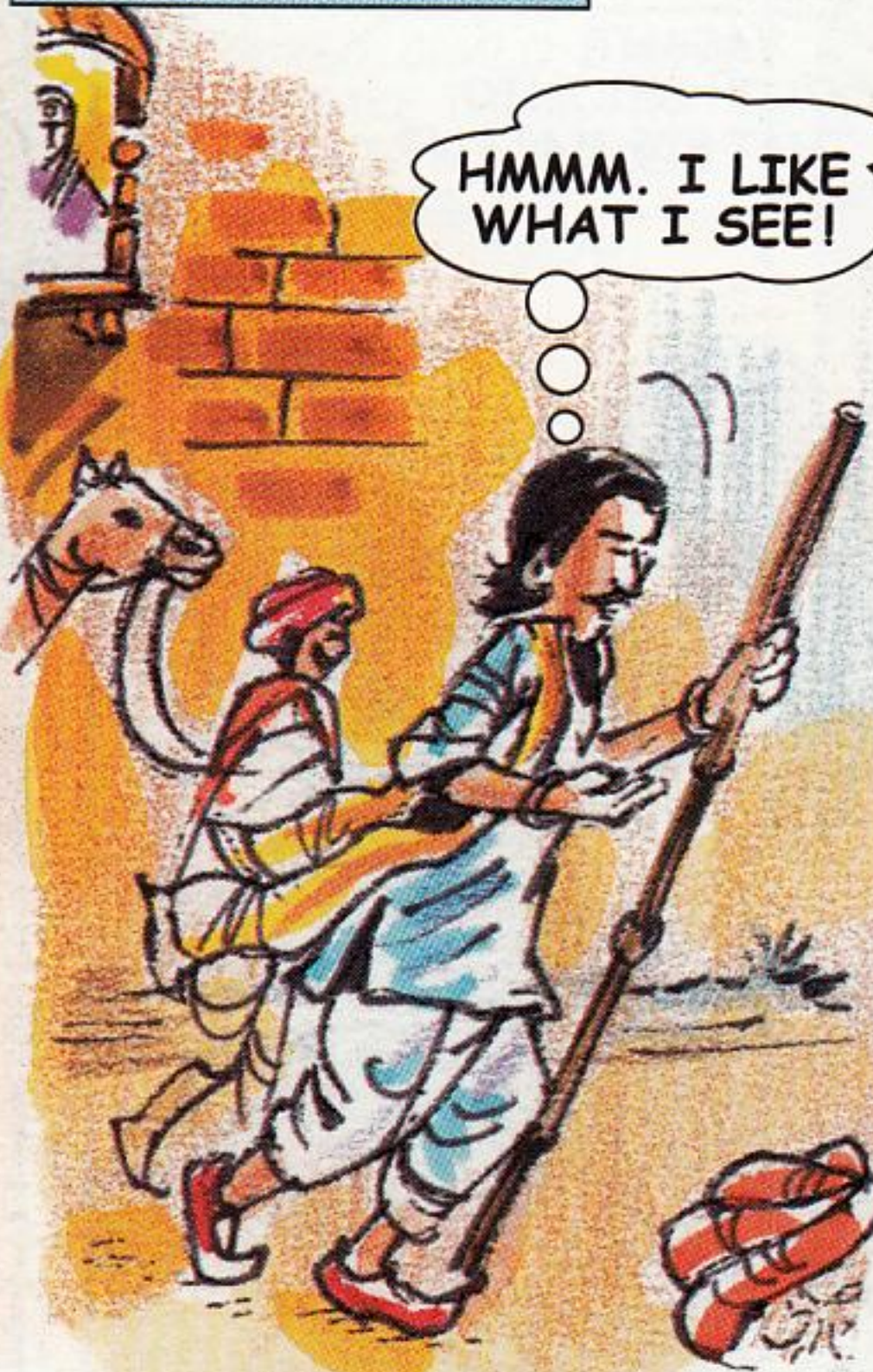
5. Brother's wife. 6. Gold dust. 7. A measurement of weight for precious metals—1 Tola=10 gm. 8. Beetel leaf.



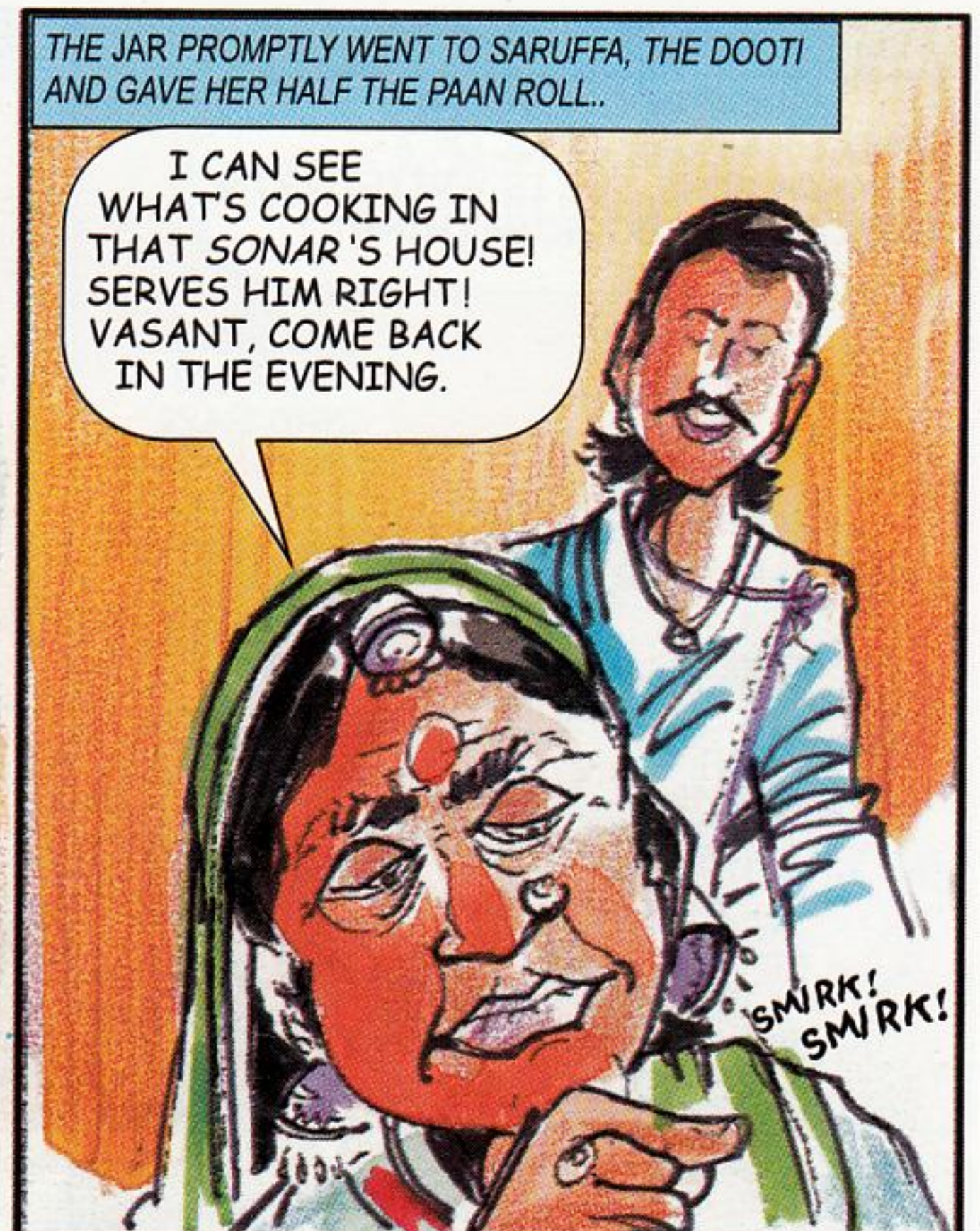


SSHH...! HANN YAHAN! UPPAR. IT'S ME, GANGLI. TAKE THIS PAAN. HALF OF IT IS FOR YOU, AND THE OTHER HALF IS FOR SARUFFA, THE DOOTI.

THE FINE YOUNG MAN WAS A JAR<sup>9</sup> CALLED VASANT.



HMMM. I LIKE WHAT I SEE!



THE JAR PROMPTLY WENT TO SARUFFA, THE DOOTI AND GAVE HER HALF THE PAAN ROLL..

I CAN SEE WHAT'S COOKING IN THAT SONAR'S HOUSE! SERVES HIM RIGHT! VASANT, COME BACK IN THE EVENING.

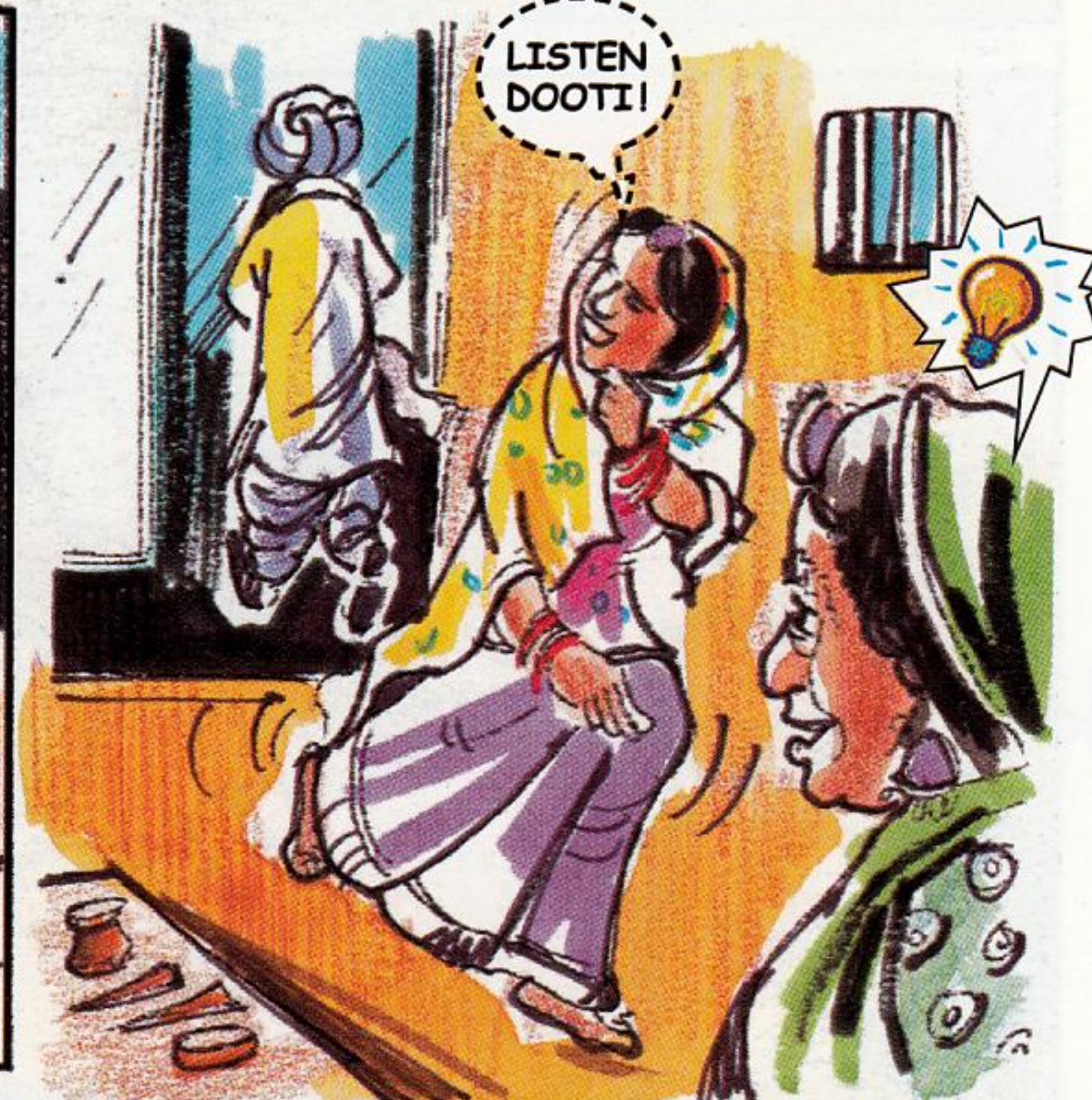
SMIRK! SMIRK!

THE DOOTI TURNED UP AT VEERAM'S DOORSTEP.



VEERAM SETH, I NEED TO GET THIS GOLD DUST WEIGHED AND EXCHANGED FOR CASH.

MY PLAN SEEMS TO BE WORKING!



LISTEN DOOTI!



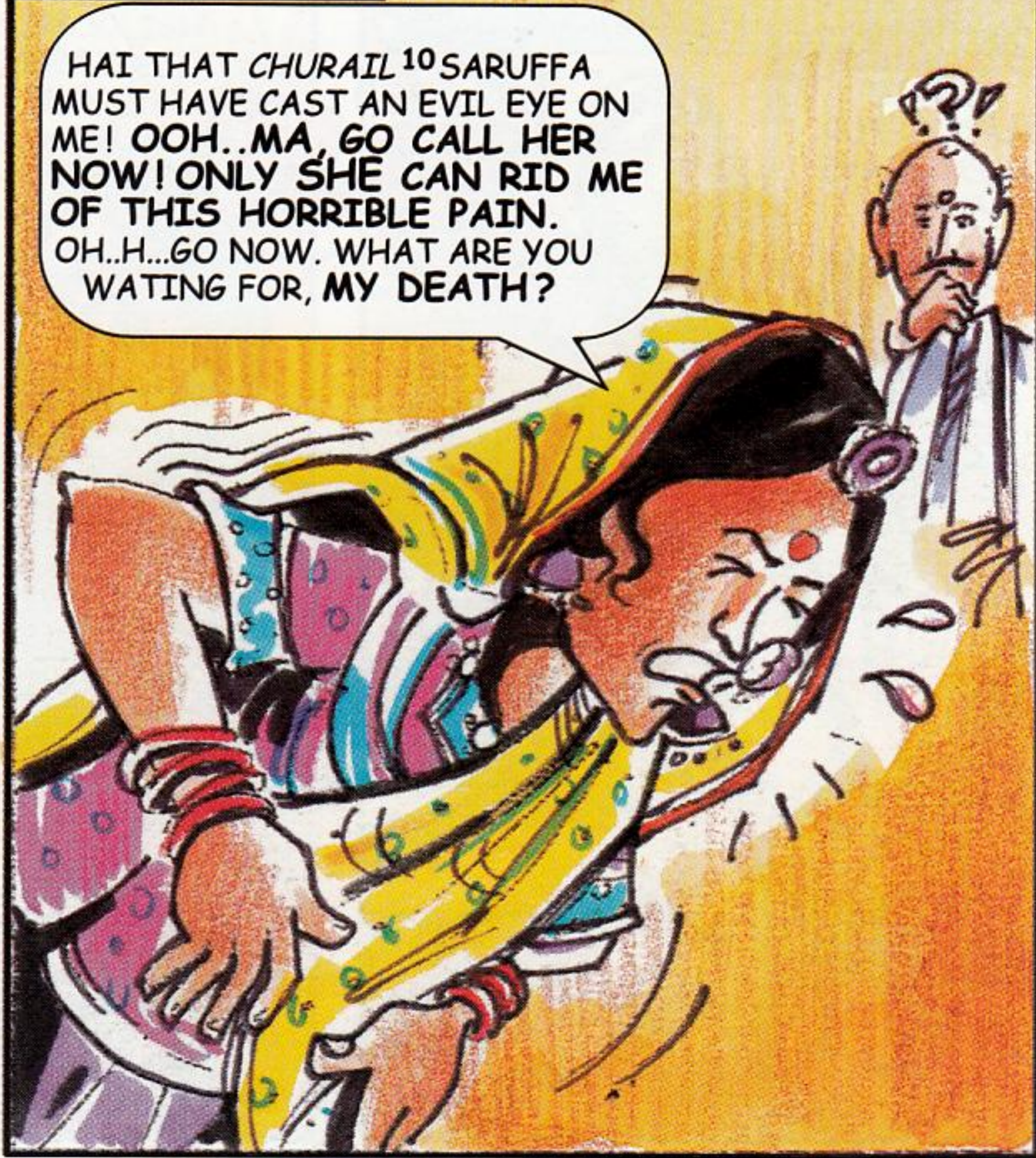
PSST!

THANK YOU, VEERAM SETH!

HERE! THIS IS WHAT YOUR GOLD IS WORTH!



SUDDENLY IN THE NIGHT...



HAI THAT CHURAIL<sup>10</sup> SARUFFA MUST HAVE CAST AN EVIL EYE ON ME! OOH..MA, GO CALL HER NOW! ONLY SHE CAN RID ME OF THIS HORRIBLE PAIN. OH..H...GO NOW. WHAT ARE YOU WATING FOR, MY DEATH?



AT THE DOOTI'S HOUSE...

ARRE O DOOTI, HURRY!  
GANGLI HAS ONE DEVIL OF A  
STOMACH ACHE. SHE IS WRITHING IN  
PAIN. PLEASE DO SOMETHING!

NAADI  
CHAD GAYI  
DIKHE HAI!!  
I WILL HAVE  
TO GIVE HER A  
SPECIAL  
MASSAGE.

SHE RAN INSIDE...

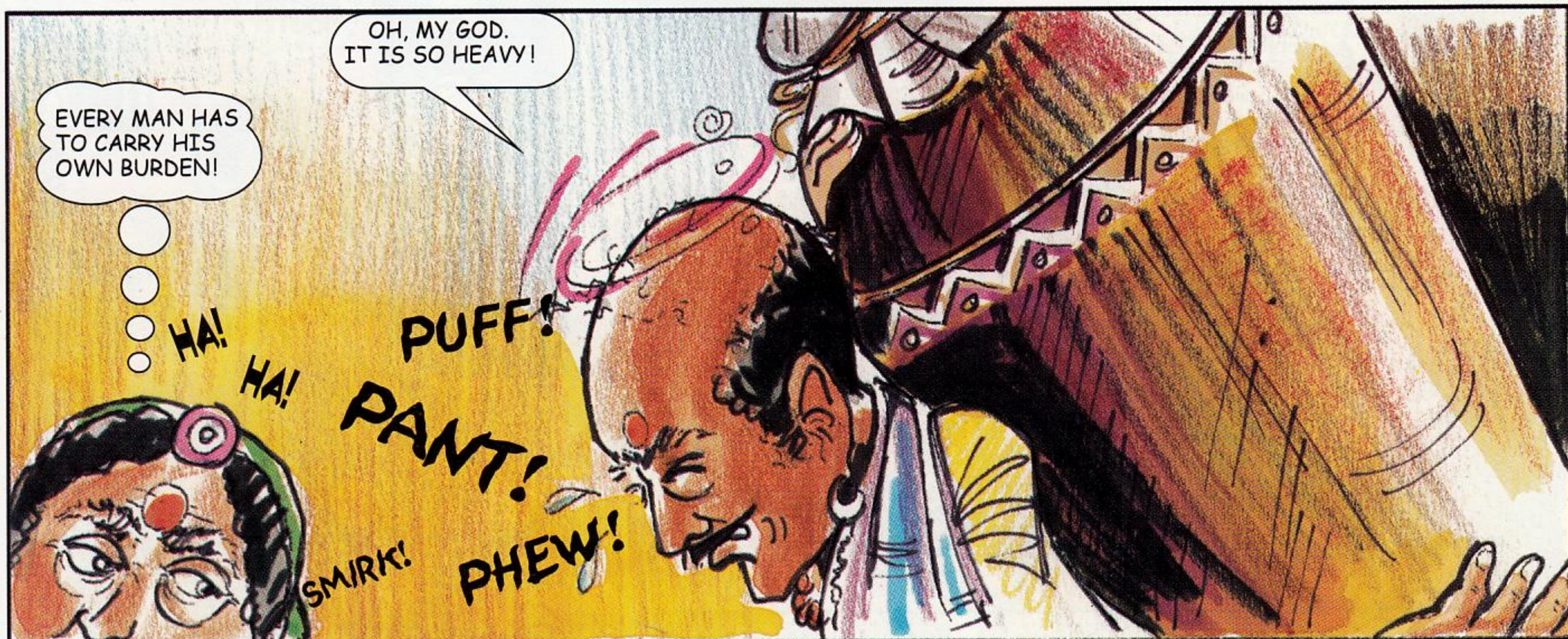
VASANT,  
QUICK! GET INTO  
THAT BIG MATA! 12

!?!  
!

DOOTI,  
HURRY!

BUT VEERAM  
BHAI, HOW CAN I  
GO NOW? THIS POT  
WITH THE MASSAGE  
OIL IS HEAVY AND  
THERE IS NO ONE TO  
CARRY IT?

I'LL  
CARRY IT!



ONCE THEY REACHED VEERAM'S HOUSE....

THIS IS  
A MATTER FOR  
WOMEN, LEAVE  
US ALONE.

BUT  
BUT...

SLAM!

HE IS GONE!  
VASANT, NOW YOU  
CAN COME OUT.

SARUFFA LEFT THE TWO ALONE...  
VASANT AND GANGLI WERE HAPPY.

VEERAM BHAI, NOW THAT  
GANGLI IS MUCH BETTER, I'M  
LEAVING. BUT SHE NEEDS TO BE  
LEFT ALONE TO REST. I'LL COME  
AND LOOK HER UP EVERYDAY.



A MONTH PASSED BY.

ENOUGH NOW, VASANT, ALL GOOD THINGS MUST COME TO AN END! GET BACK INTO THE MATA, WE HAVE TO LEAVE!

BUT DOOTI, JUST ONE MORE DAY!

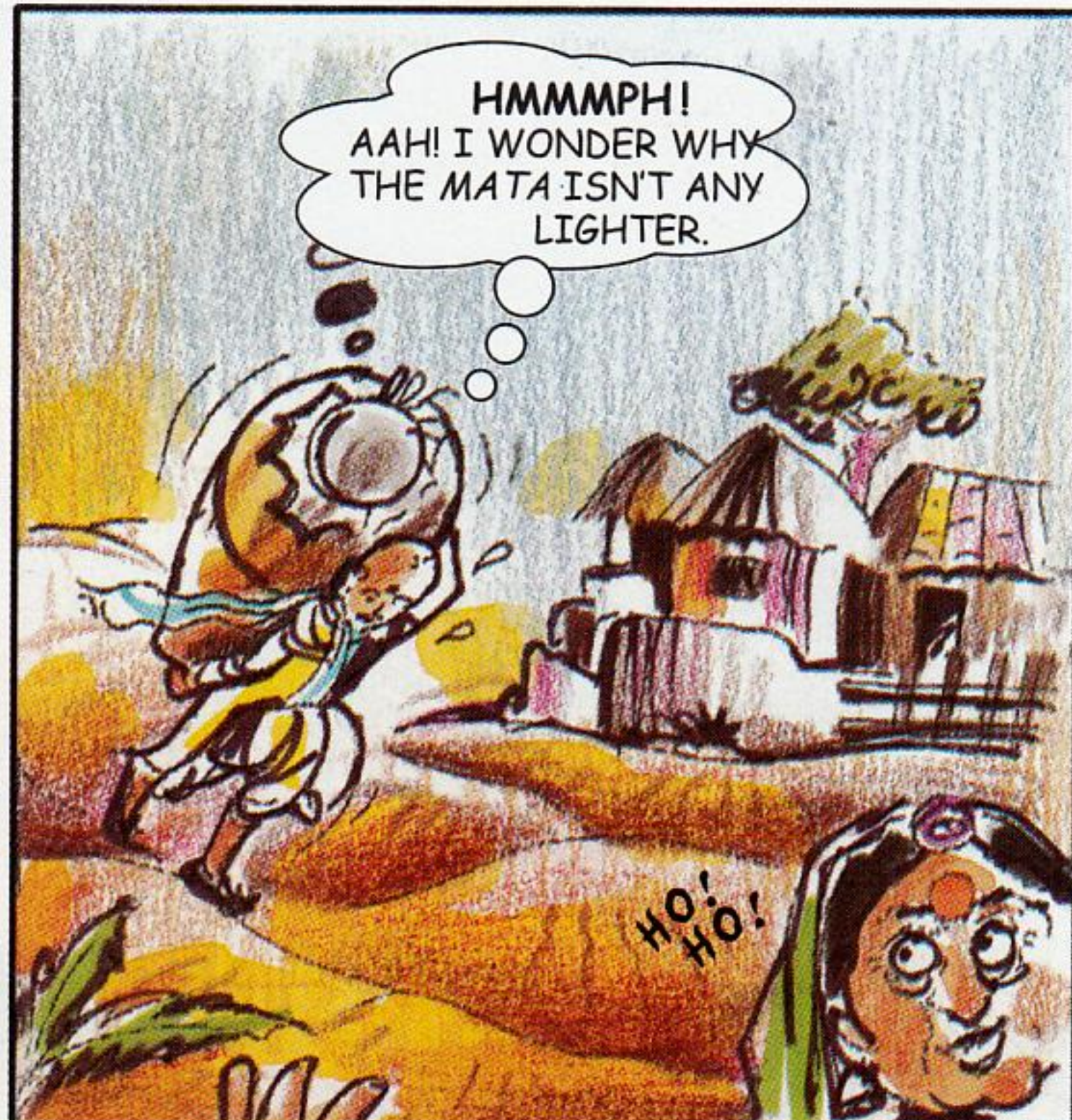


VEERAM BHAI, YOUR WIFE IS CURED. CHALO, I HAVE TO TAKE THE MATA BACK TO MY PLACE. I MAY NEED THE REMAINING OIL.

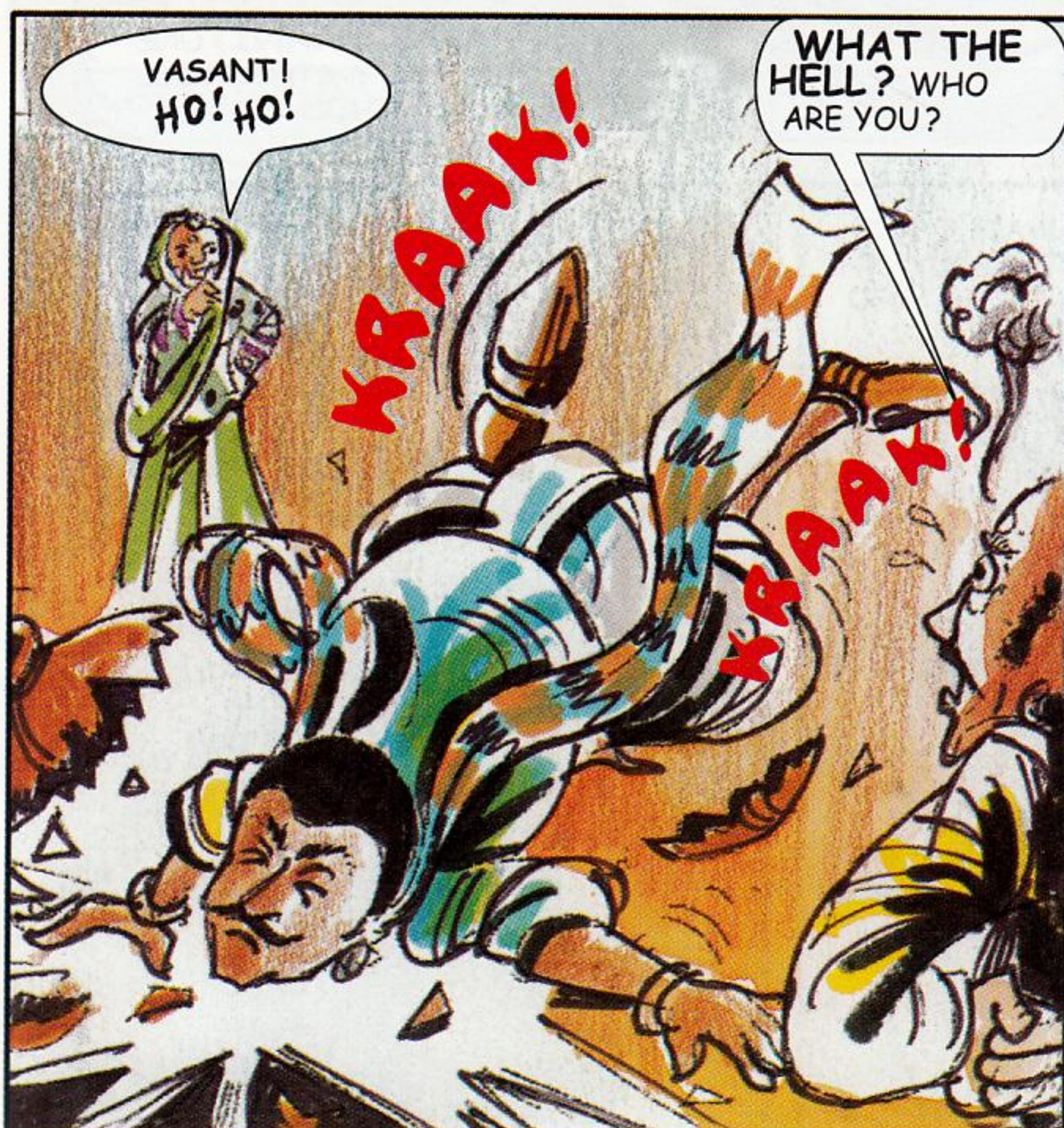
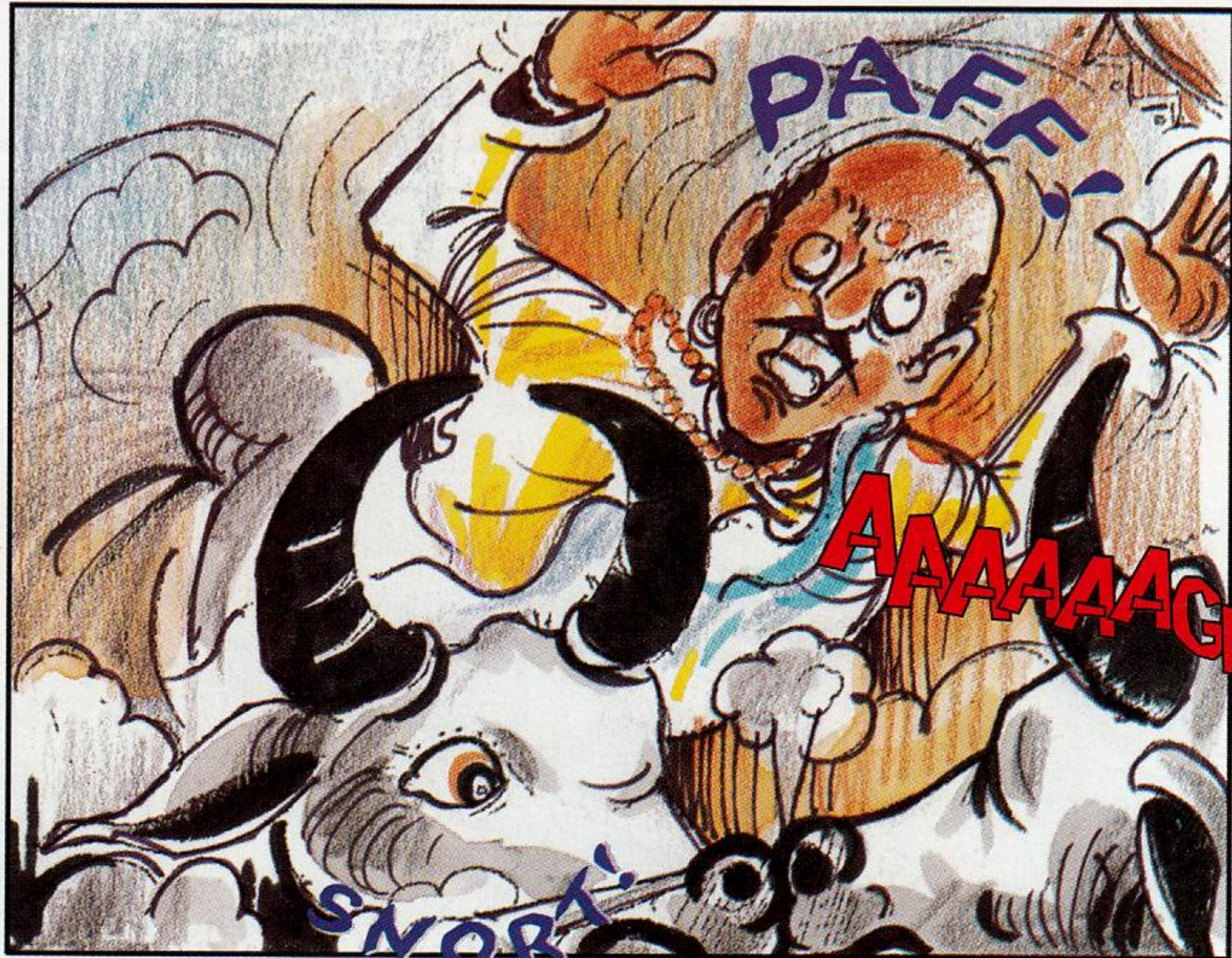
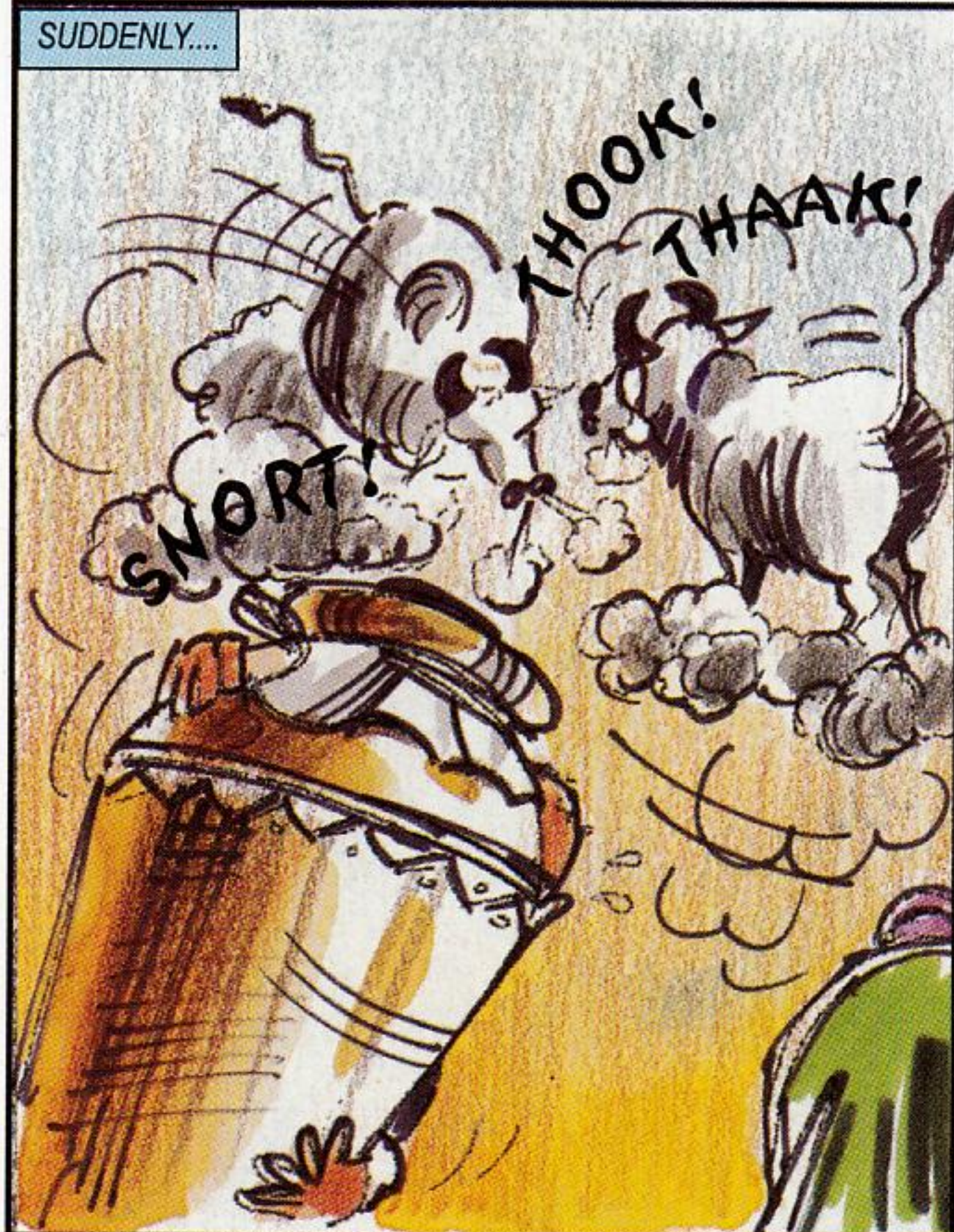
CARRY AGAIN!?



HMMMMPH! AAH! I WONDER WHY THE MATA ISN'T ANY LIGHTER.



SUDDENLY....

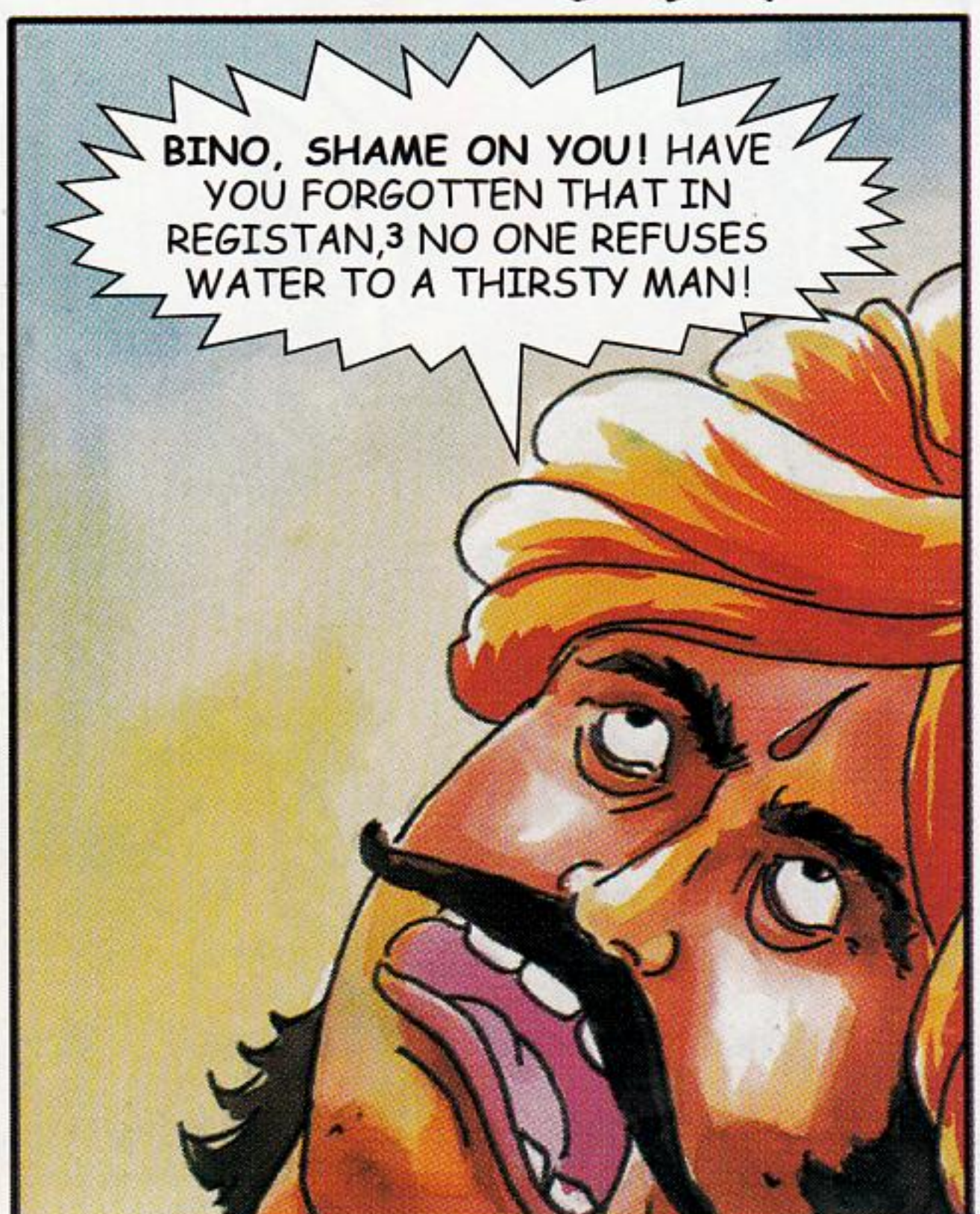
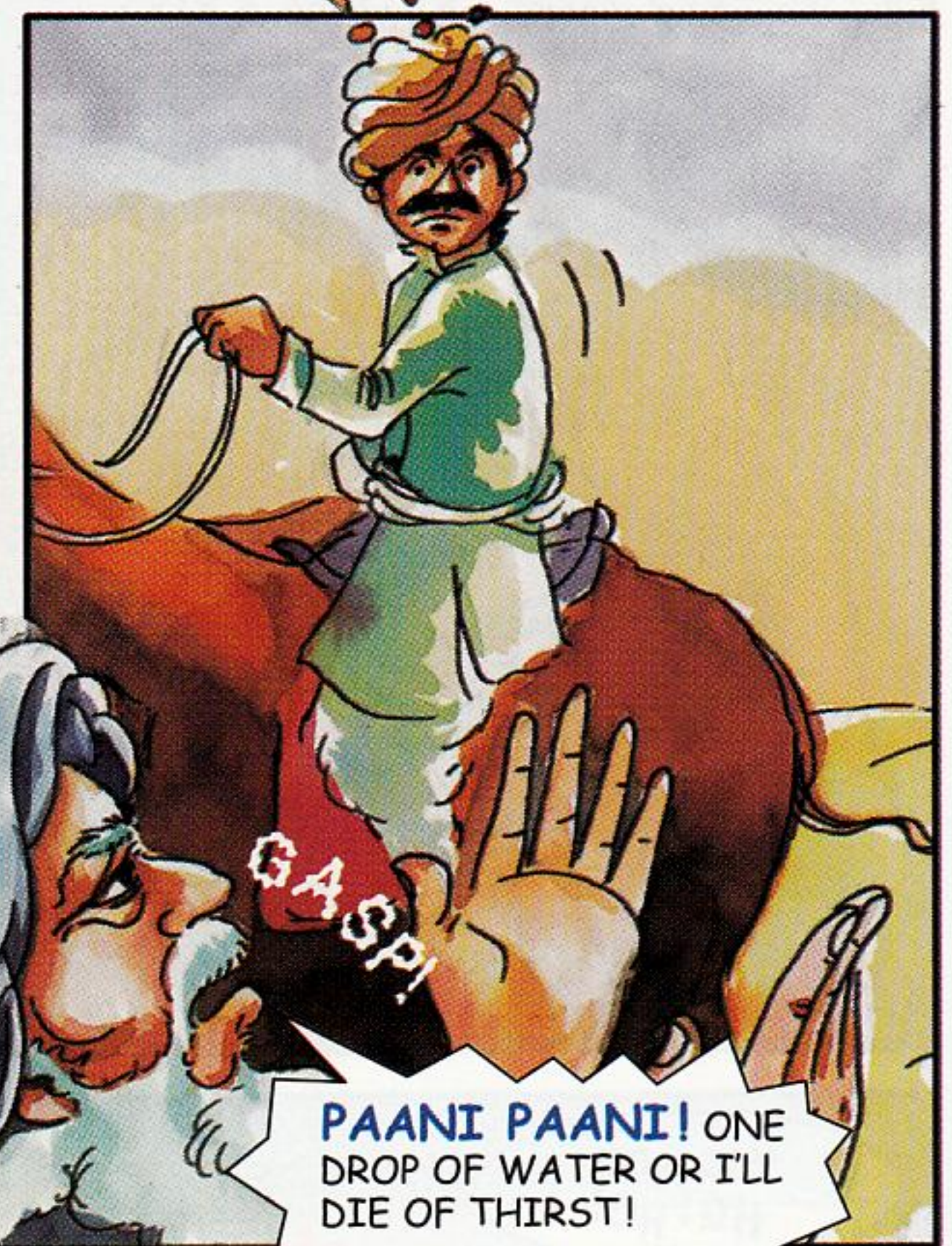
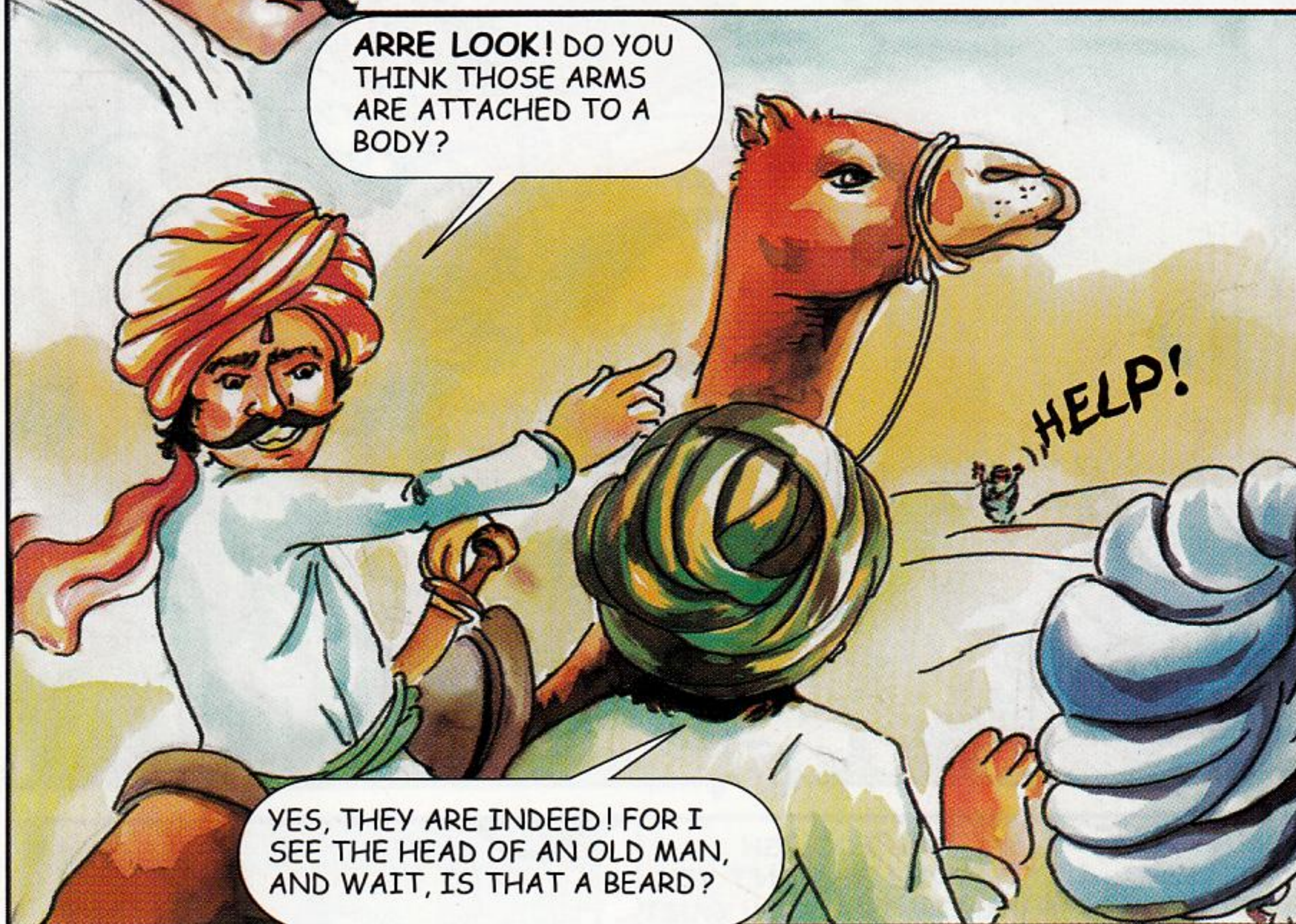
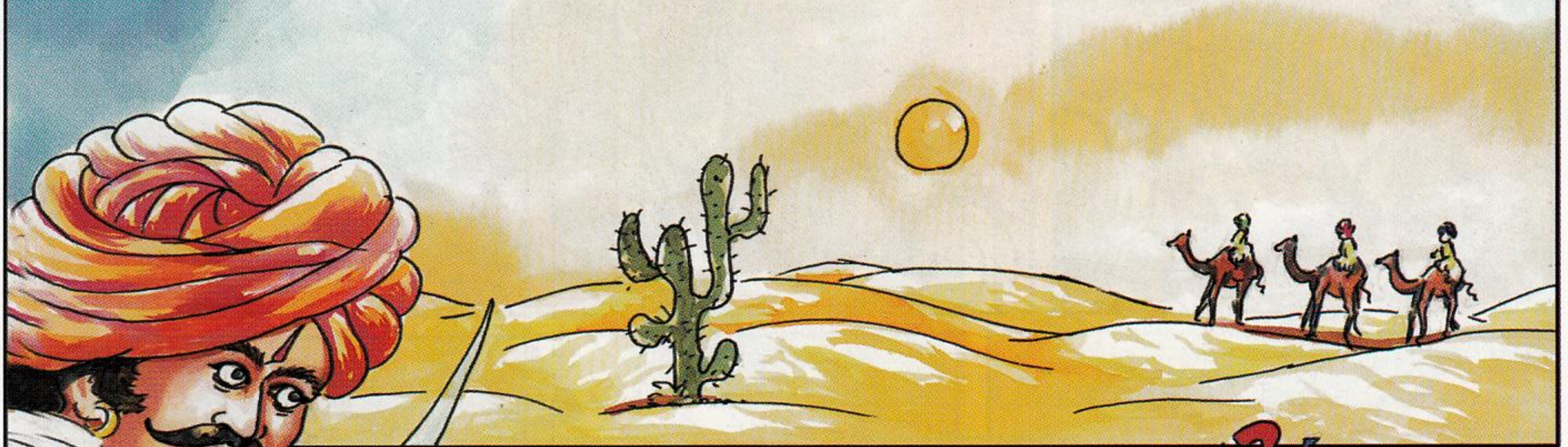


THE END



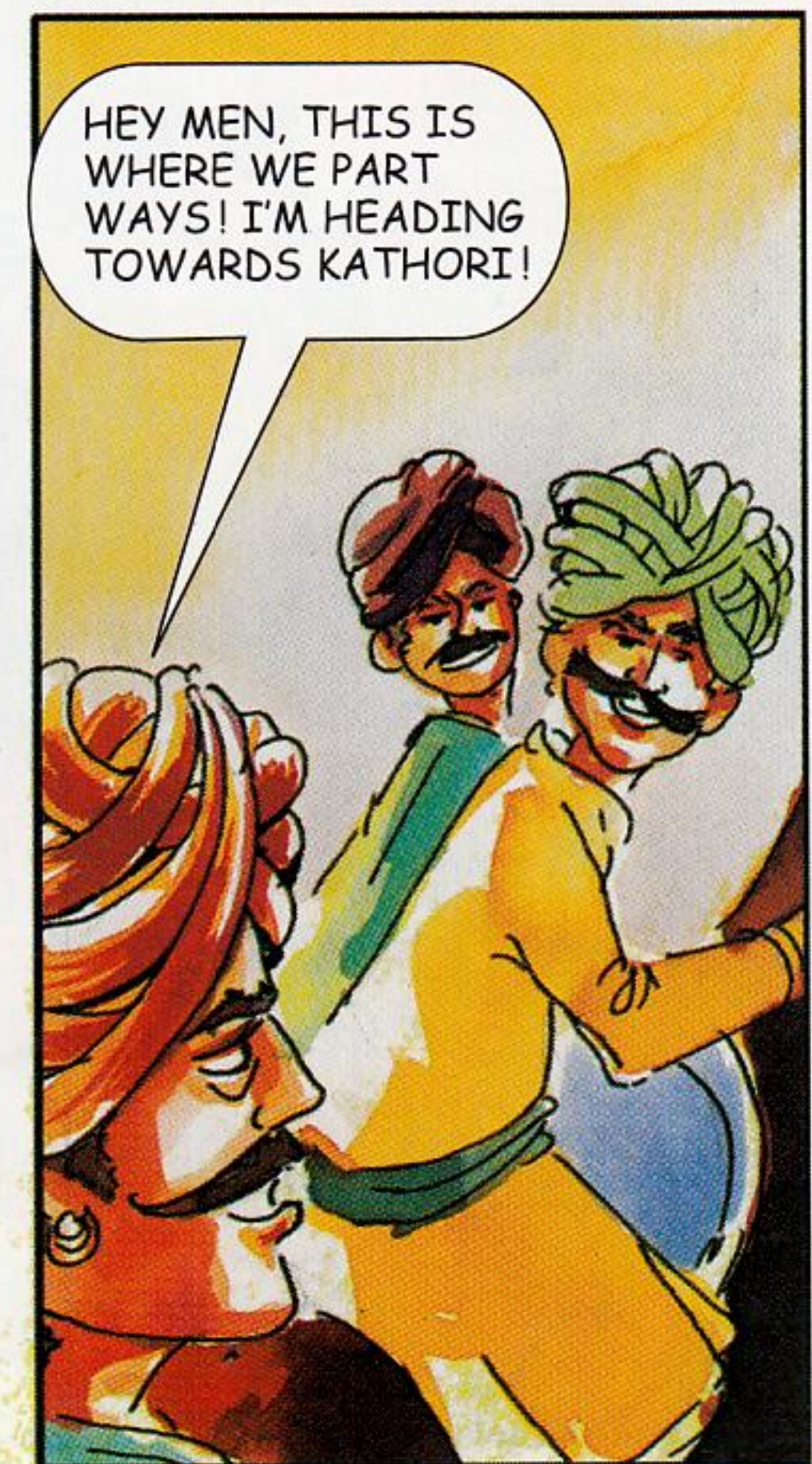
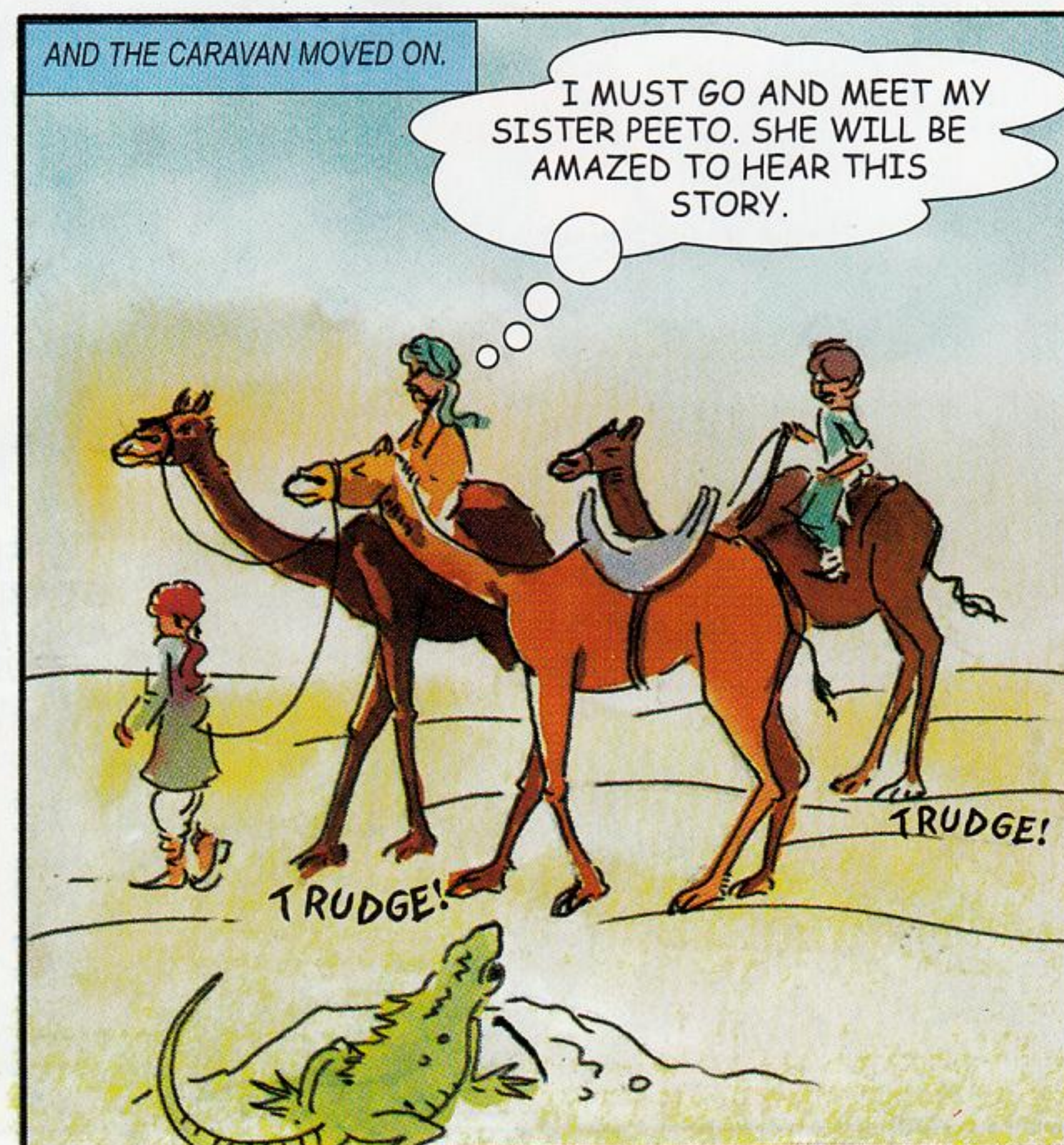
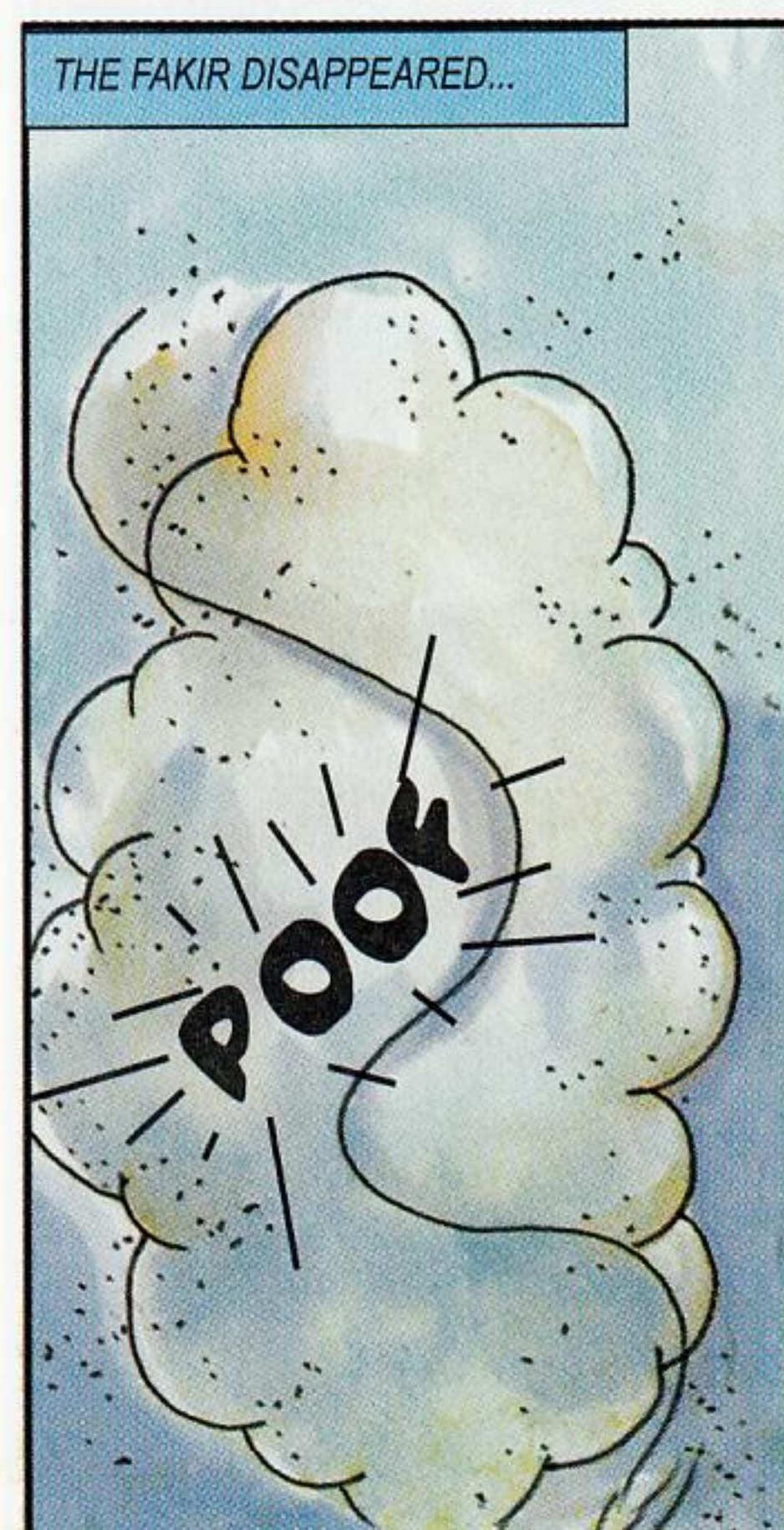
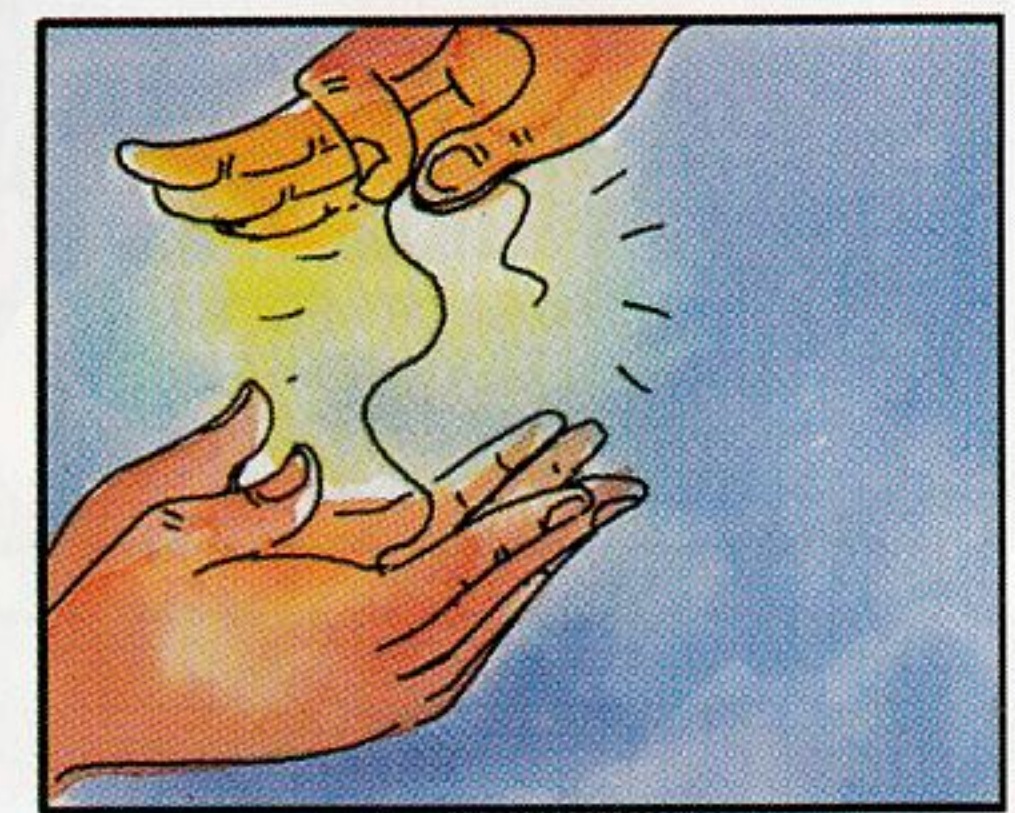
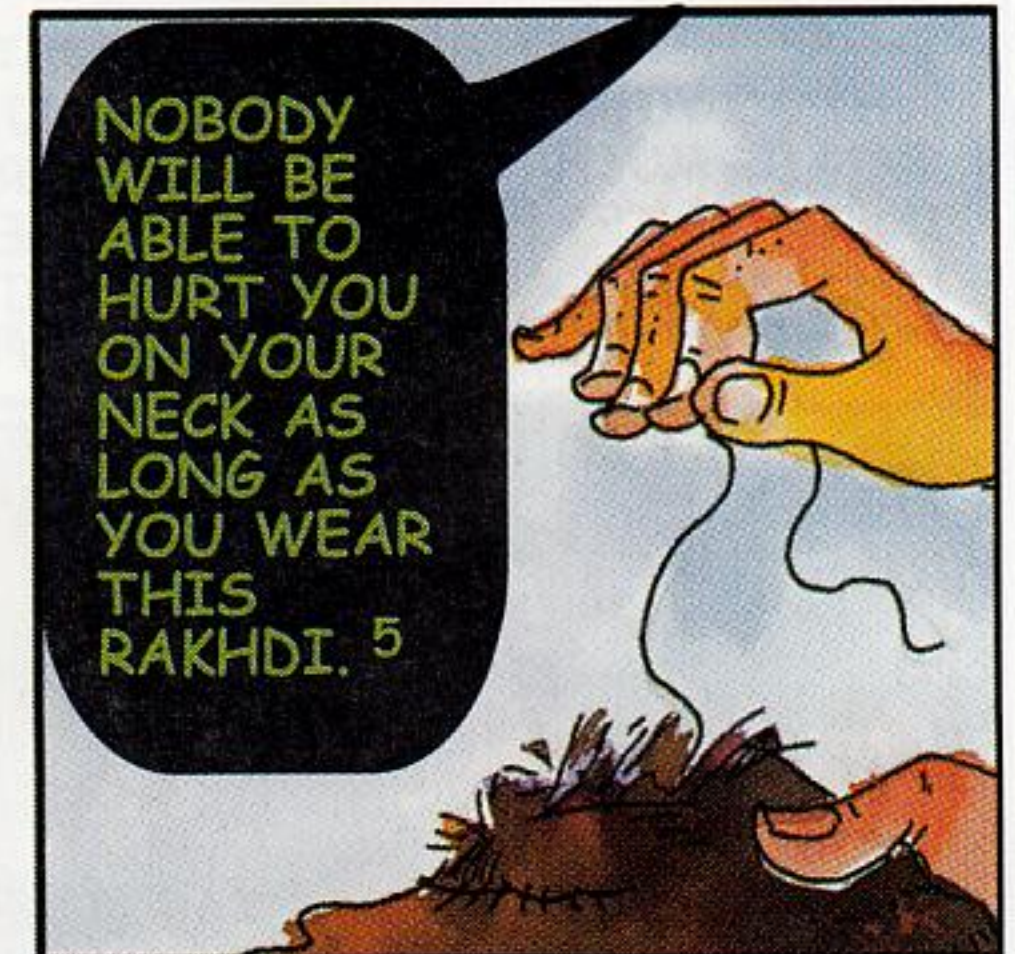
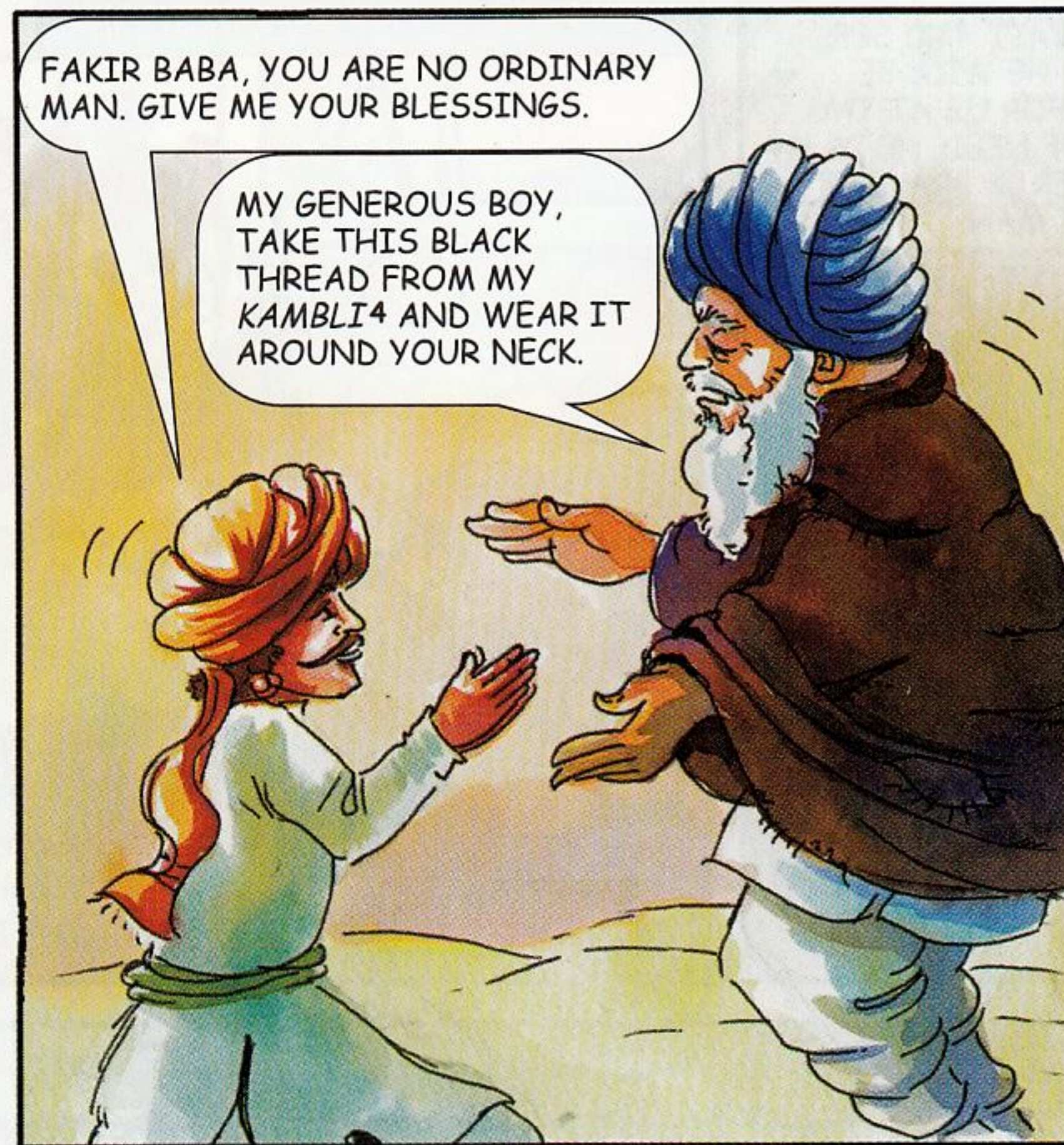
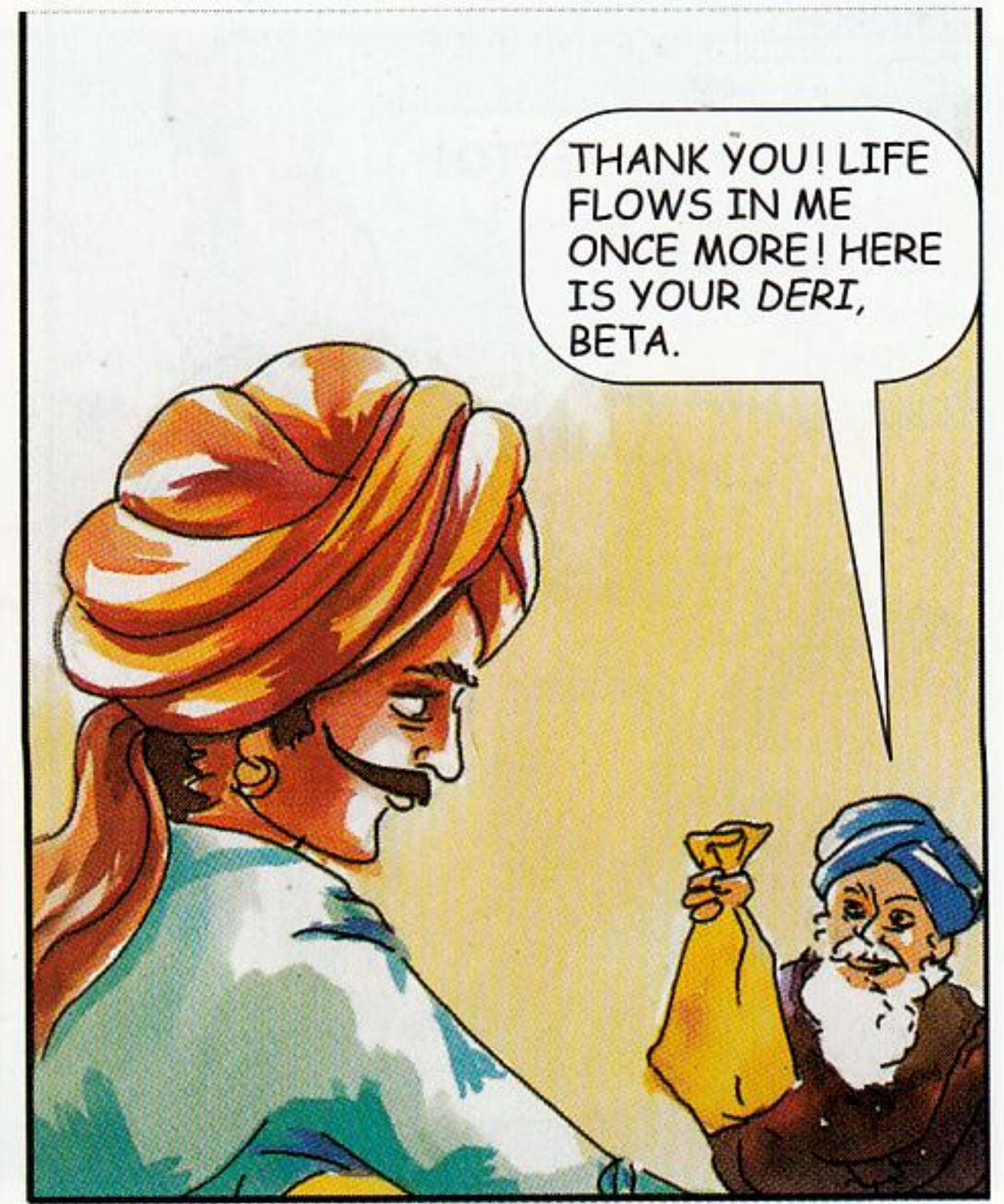
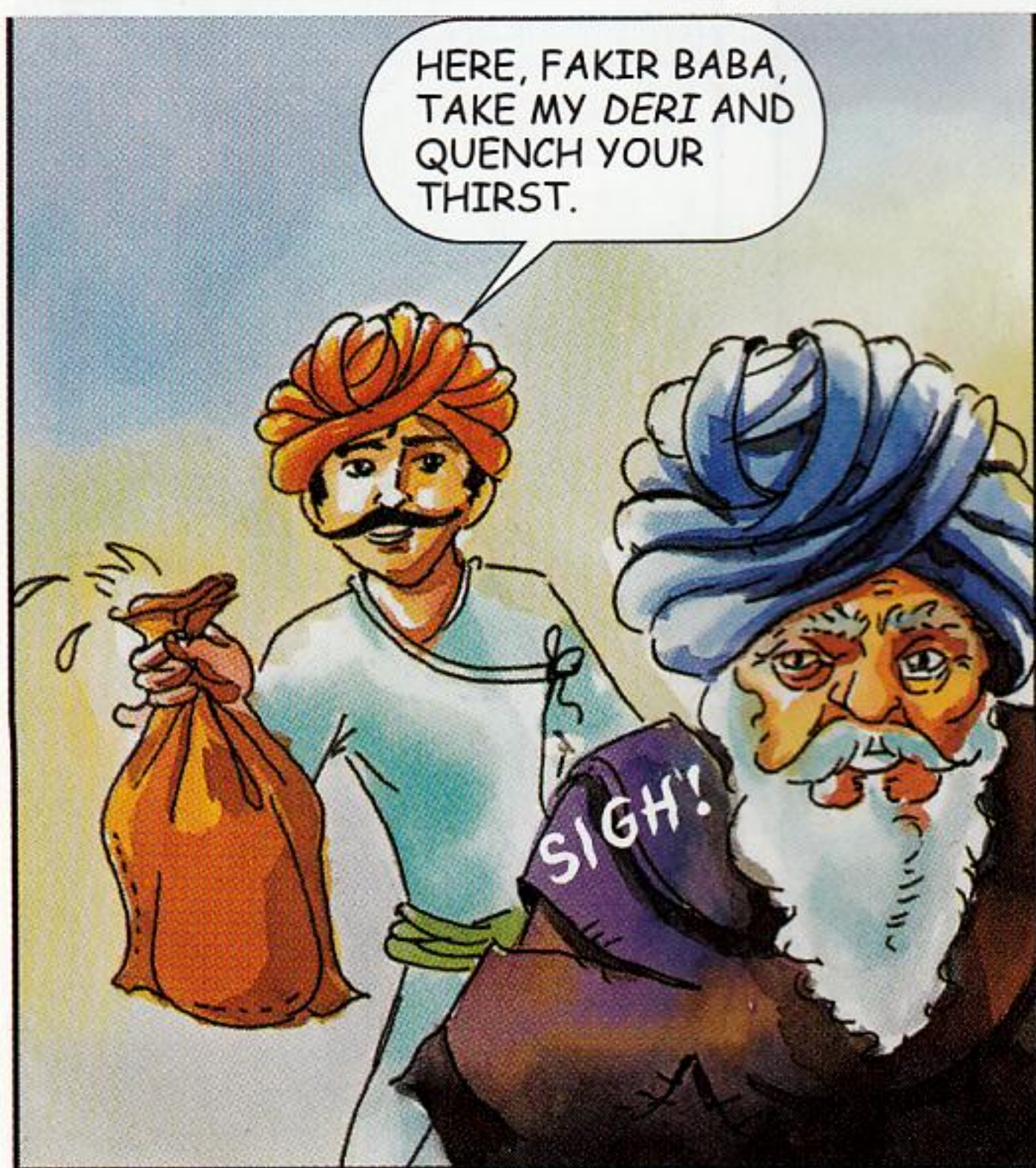
# BUTOPIR

DUNGAR SINGH, A MOKAL BHATI<sup>1</sup>, WAS A RESIDENT OF MOKALA, A VILLAGE IN MADH PRADESH. ONCE ON A HOT AFTERNOON, HE WAS TRAVELLING IN A CARAVAN FROM TANOT, THE ANCIENT CAPITAL OF JAISALMER, WHEN...



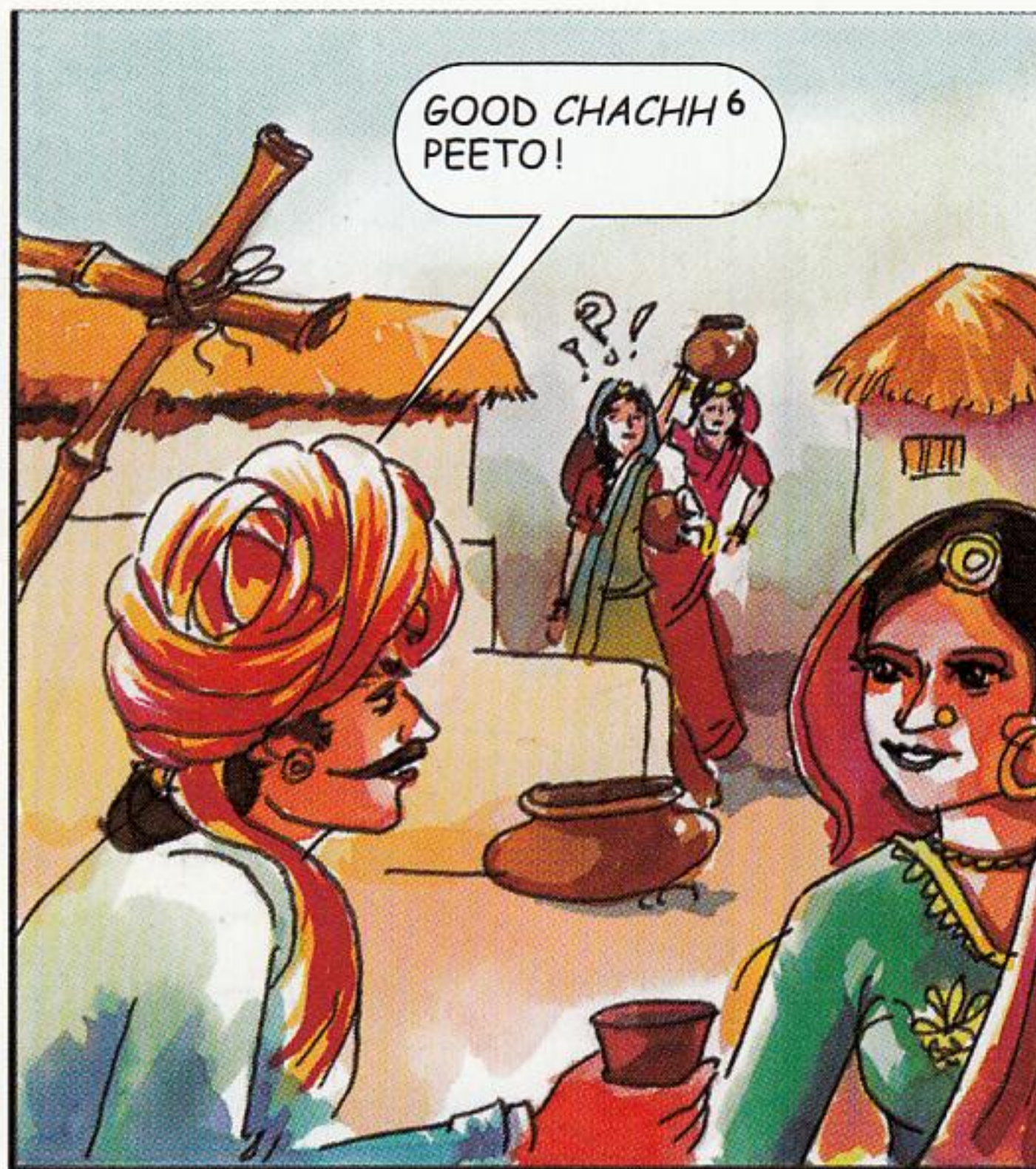
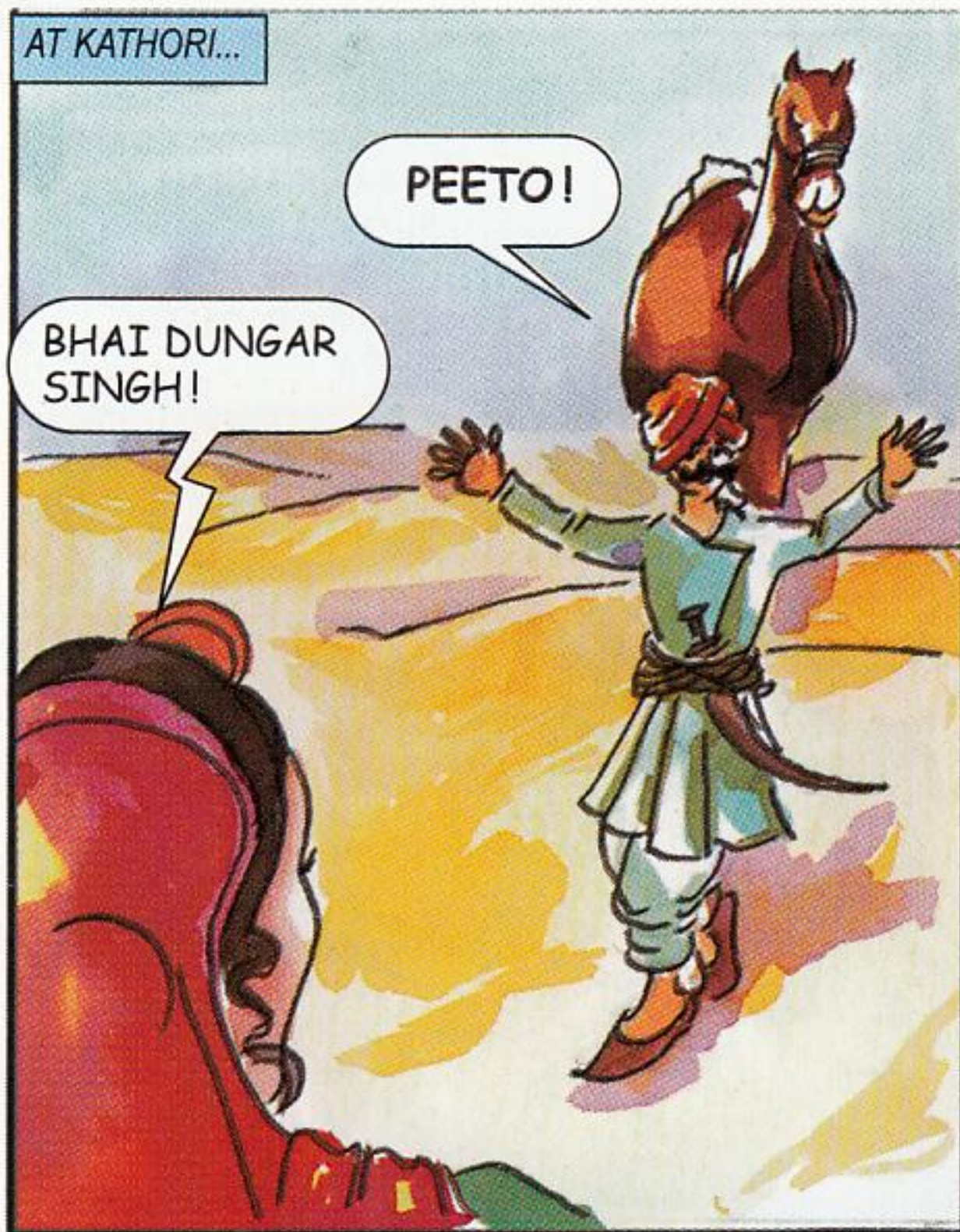
1. A Rajput tribe known to be the descendents of the Yadavas. 2. Leather sacks used to carry water. 3. Desert.



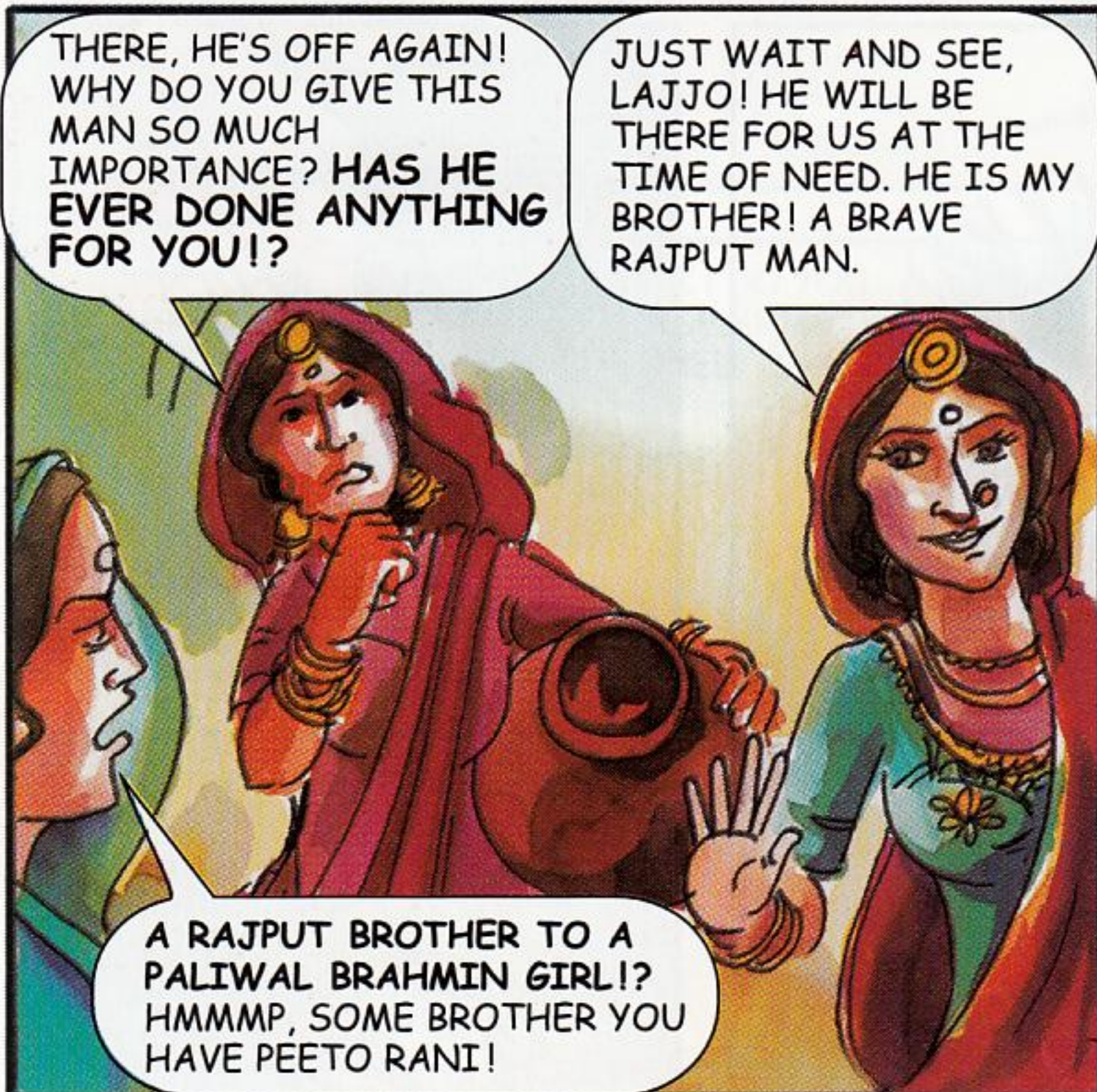
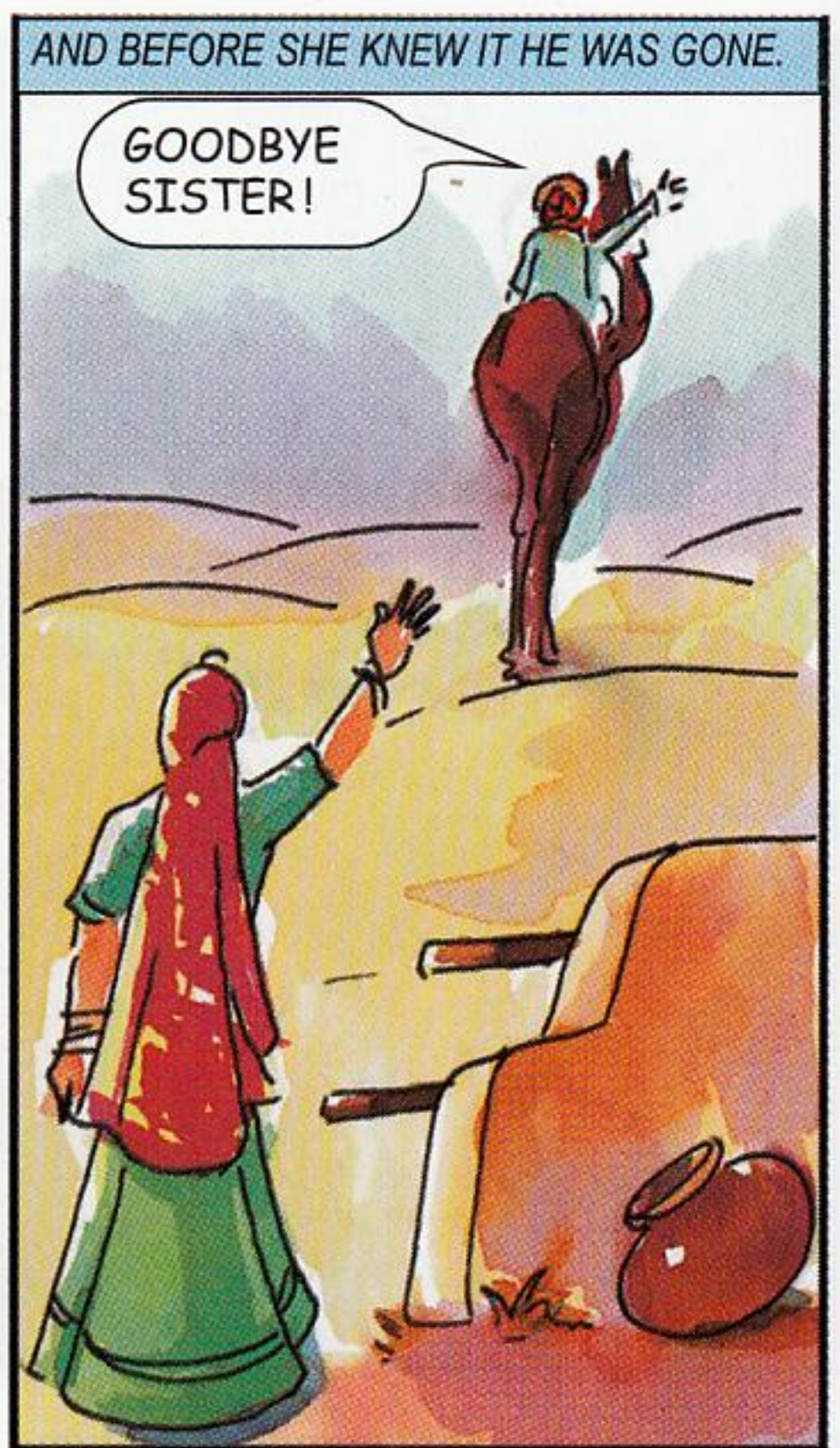




AT KATHORI...



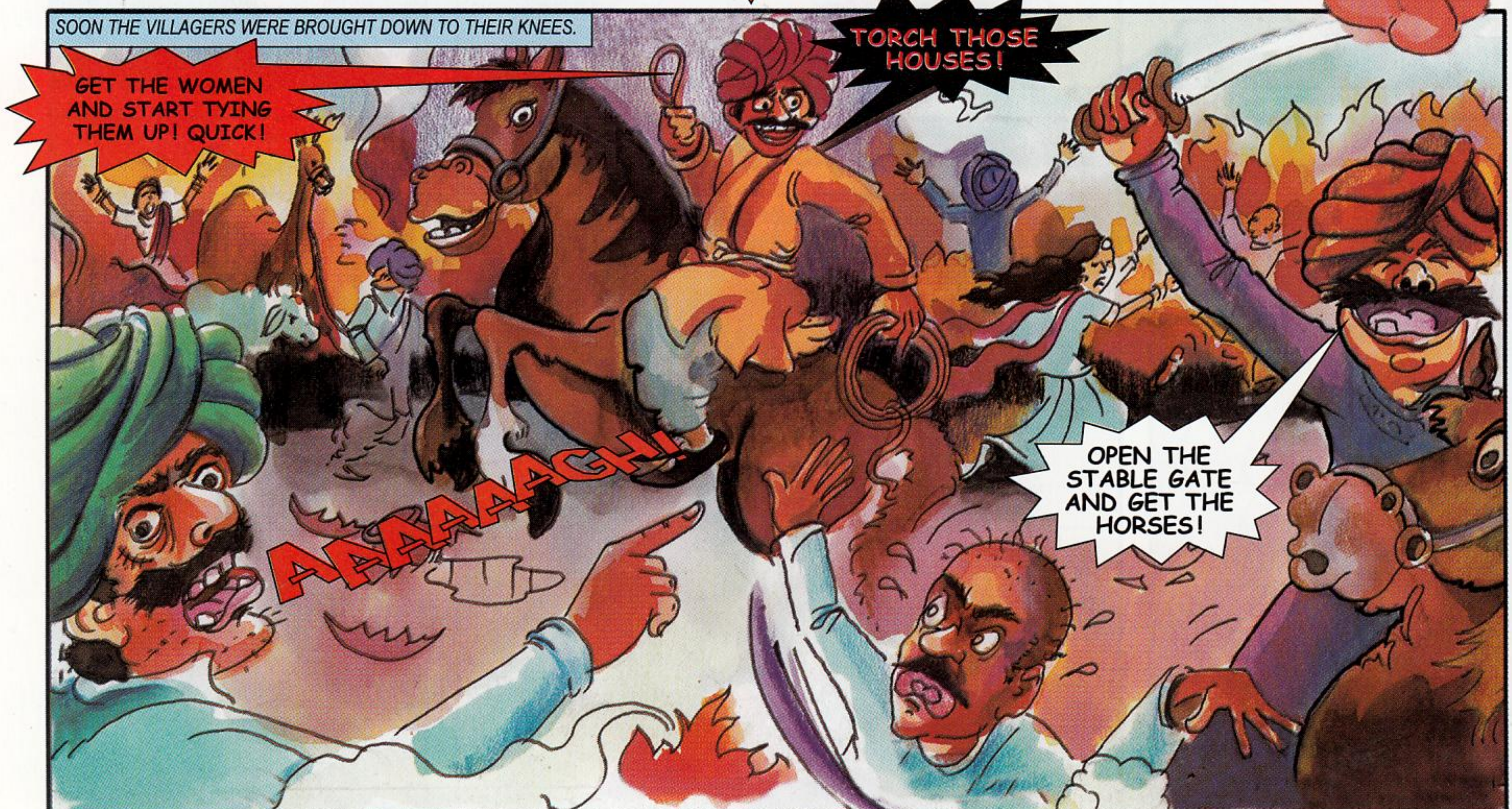
AND BEFORE SHE KNEW IT HE WAS GONE.



ONE DAY IN KATHORI AT THE BREAK OF DAWN...



SOON THE VILLAGERS WERE BROUGHT DOWN TO THEIR KNEES.

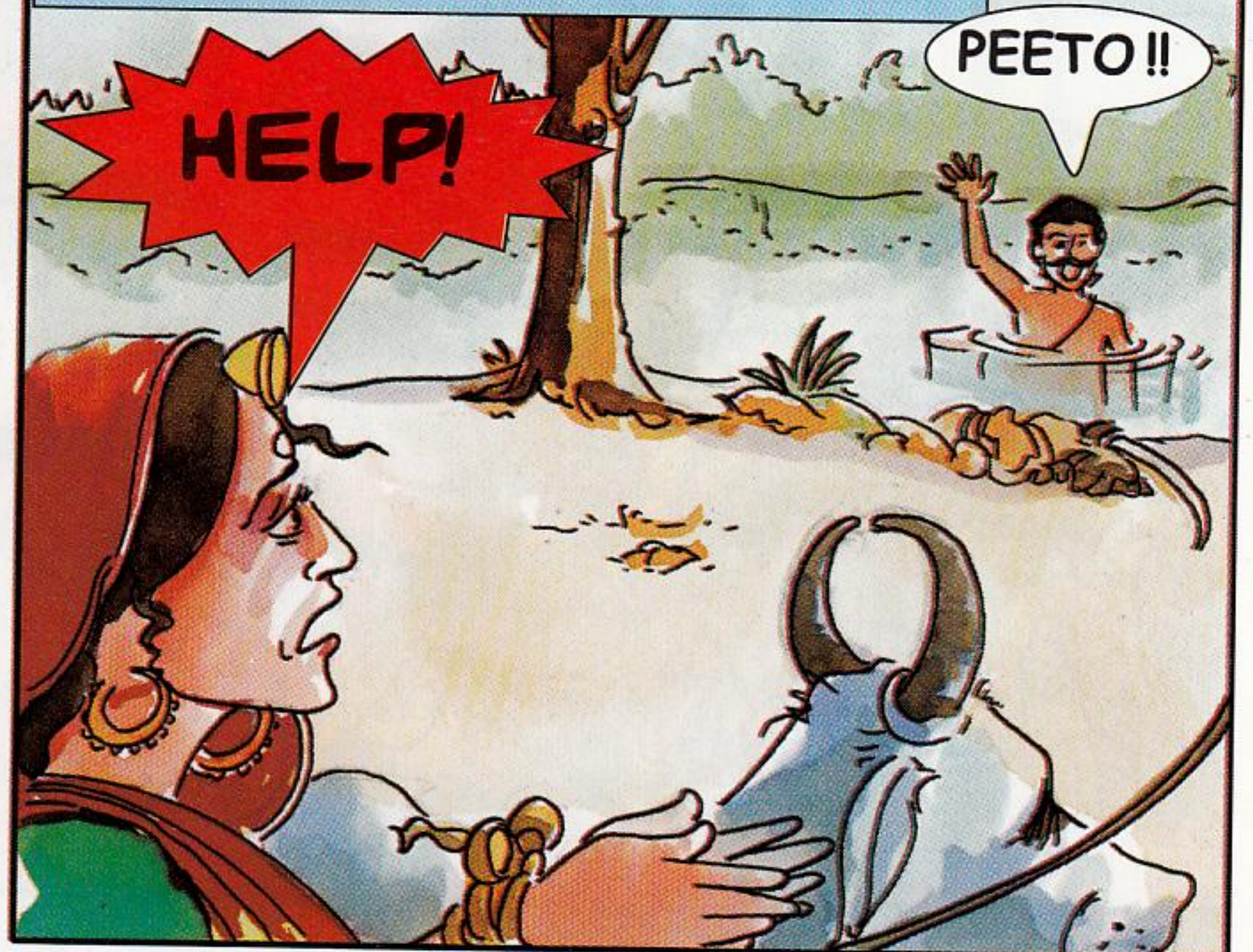




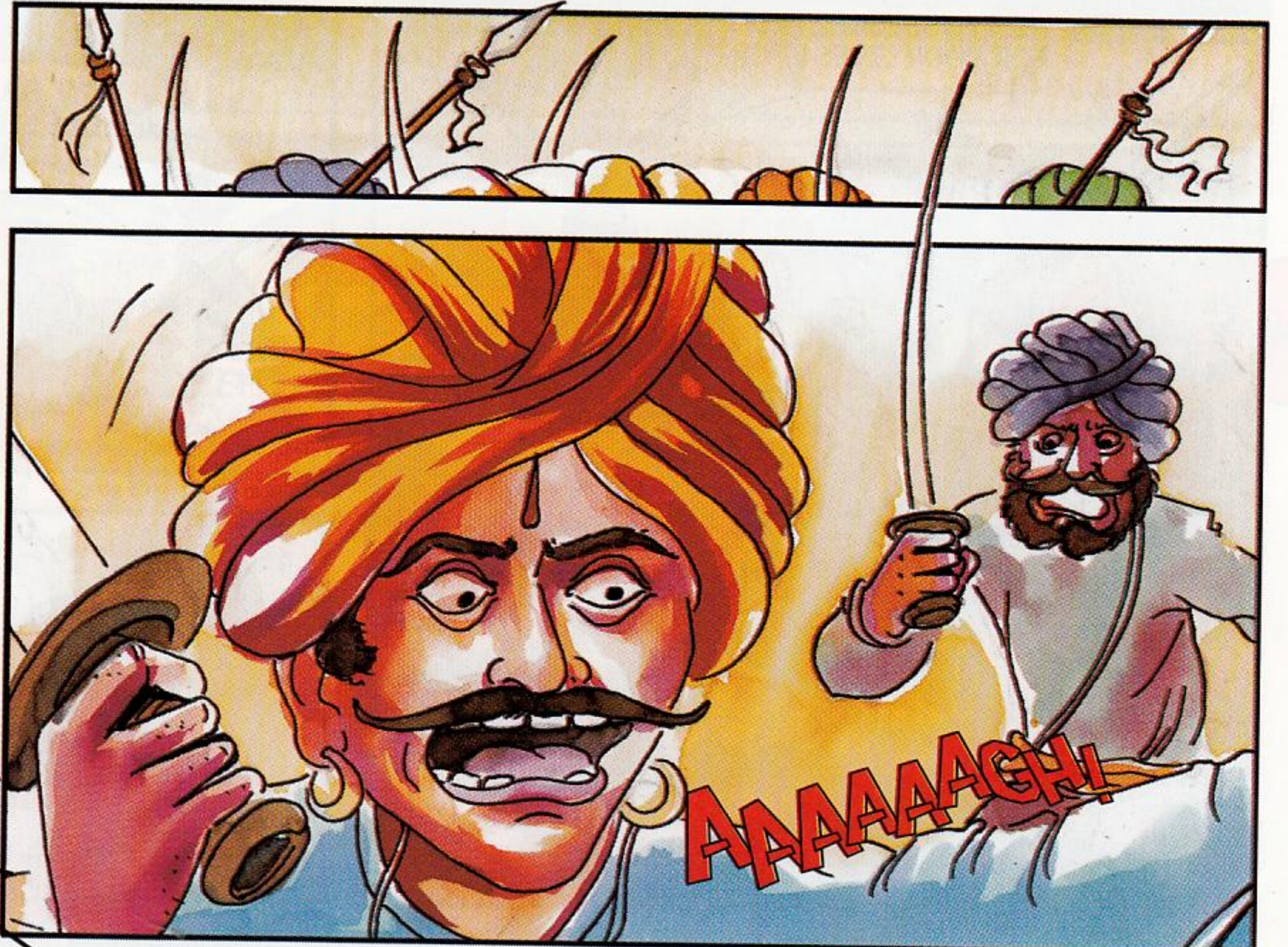
MEANWHILE AT THE BHADGAR LAKE NEAR KATHORI...



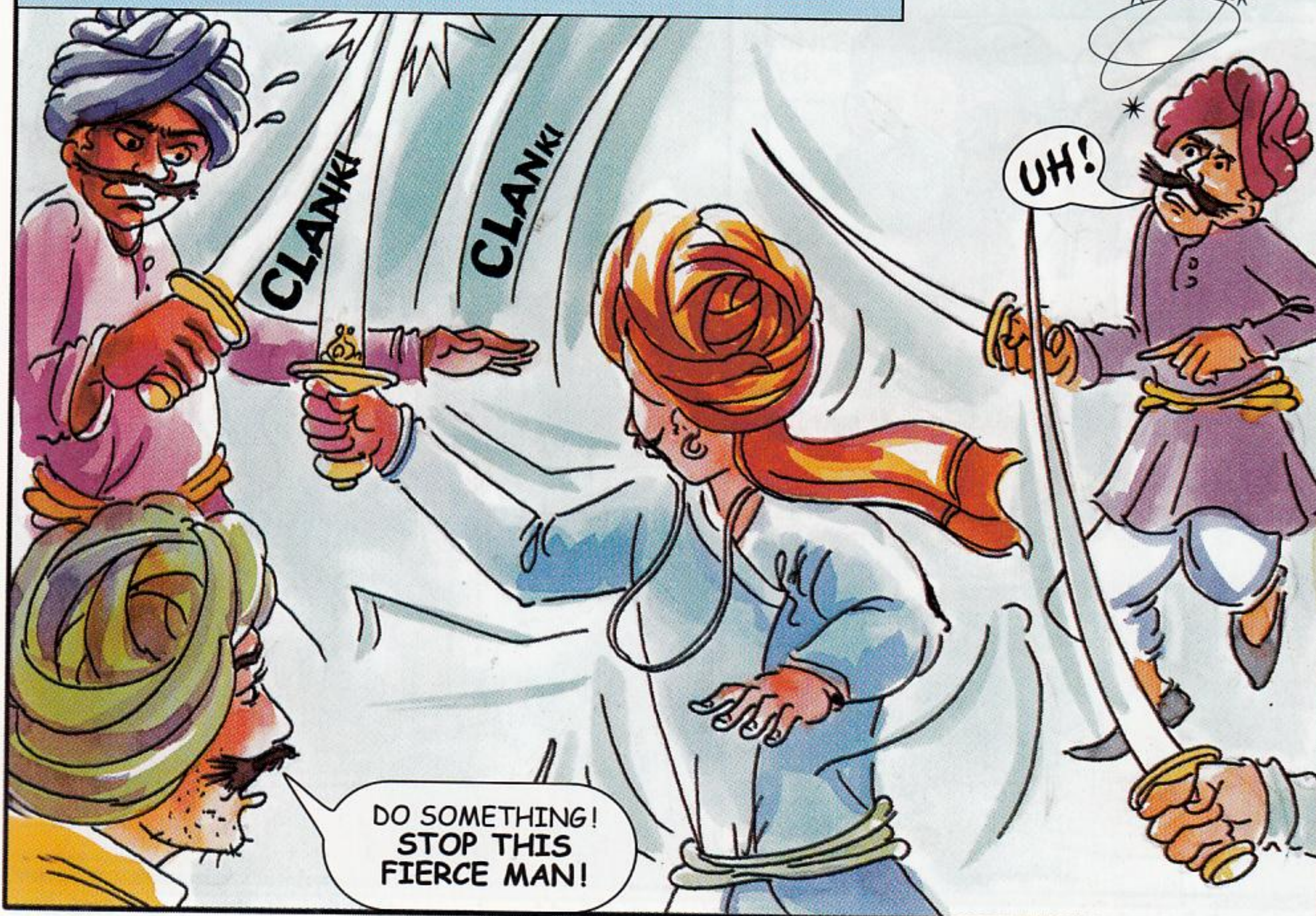
SUDDENLY DUNGAR SINGH NOTICES PEETO..



IN A HURRY, DUNGAR SINGH LEFT HIS NECK-BAND BEHIND AND CHARGED TOWARDS THE DACOITS.

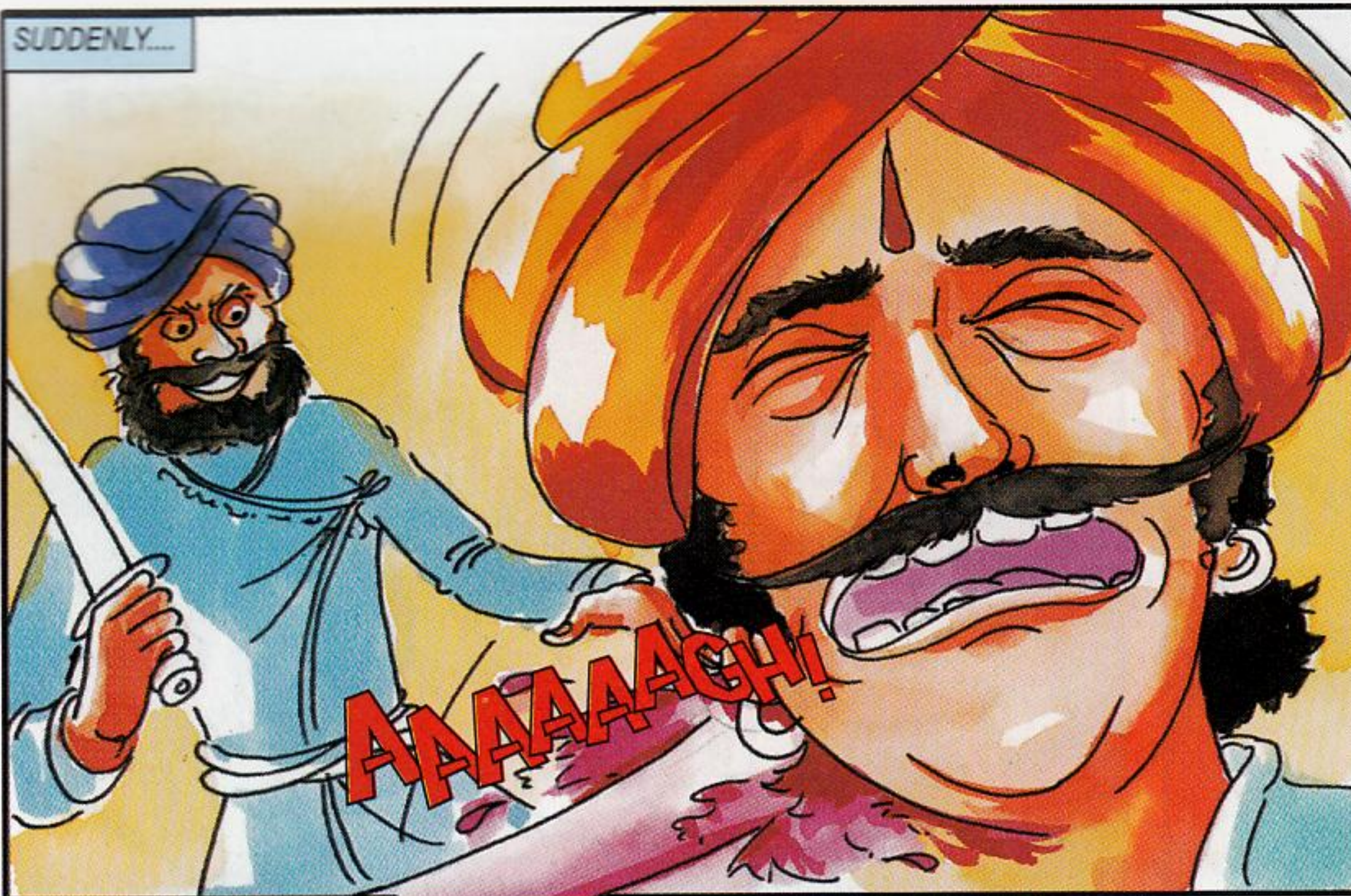


IN NO TIME THE WOMEN WERE SET FREE. NOW THE DACOITS WERE DESPERATE...

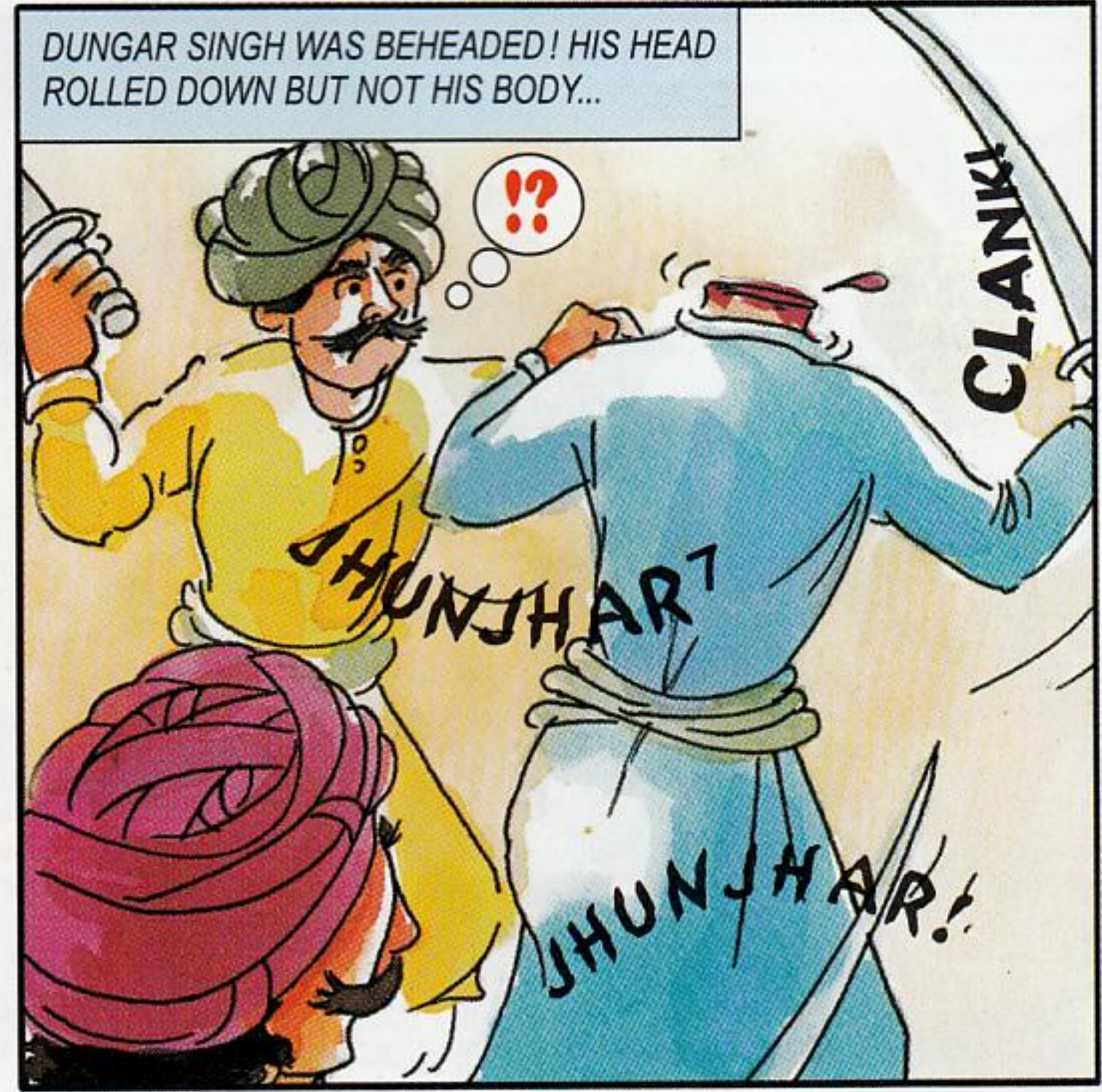




SUDDENLY...

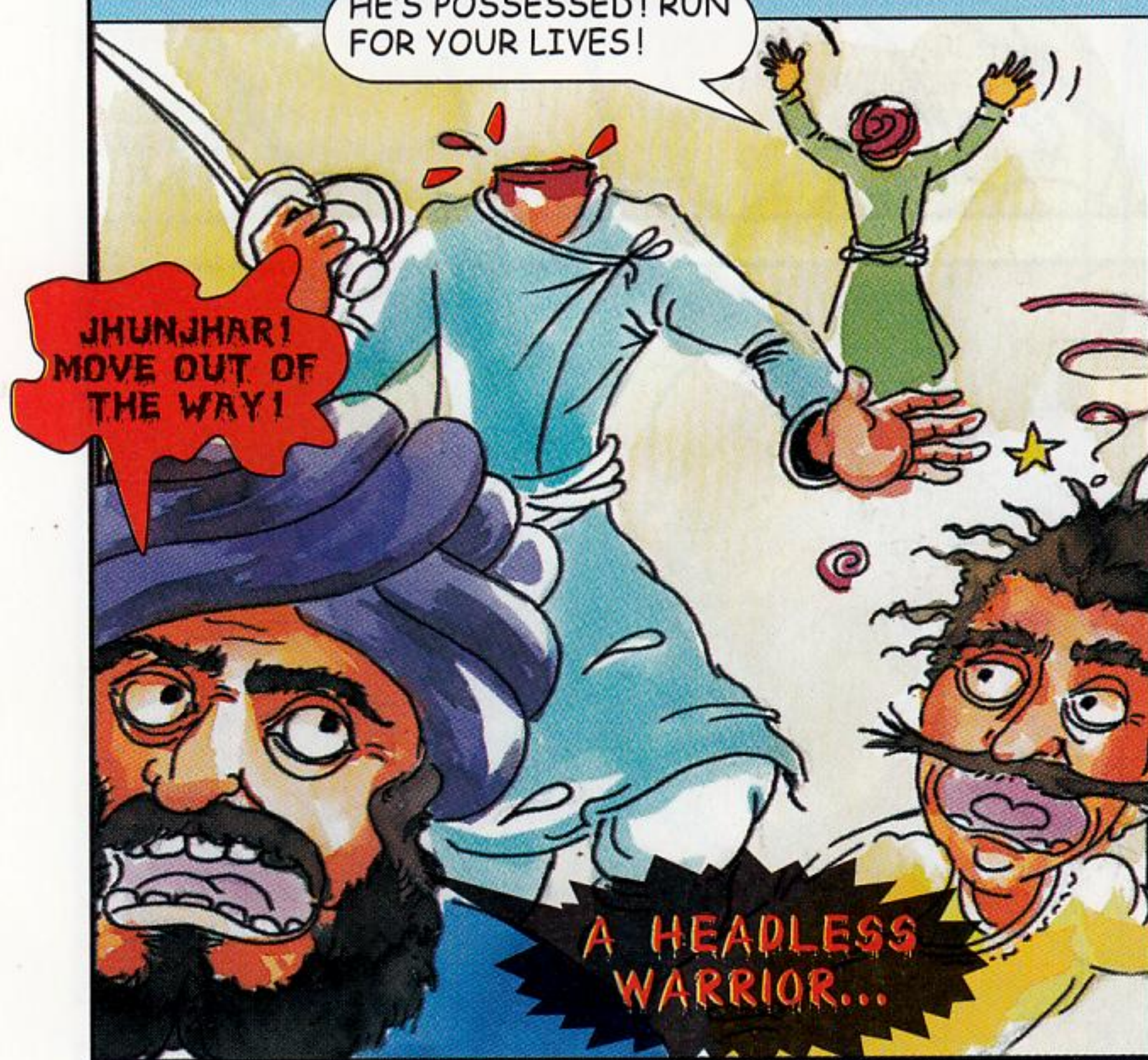


DUNGAR SINGH WAS BEHEADED! HIS HEAD ROLLED DOWN BUT NOT HIS BODY...



ARMED WITH A SWORD, DUNGAR SINGH'S BODY CONTINUED TO MOVE WITH GREAT FRENZY.

HE'S POSSESSED! RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!



SOON HE REACHED THE PROVINCE OF SINDH...

PIR BABA! A HEADLESS WARRIOR! DO SOMETHING.

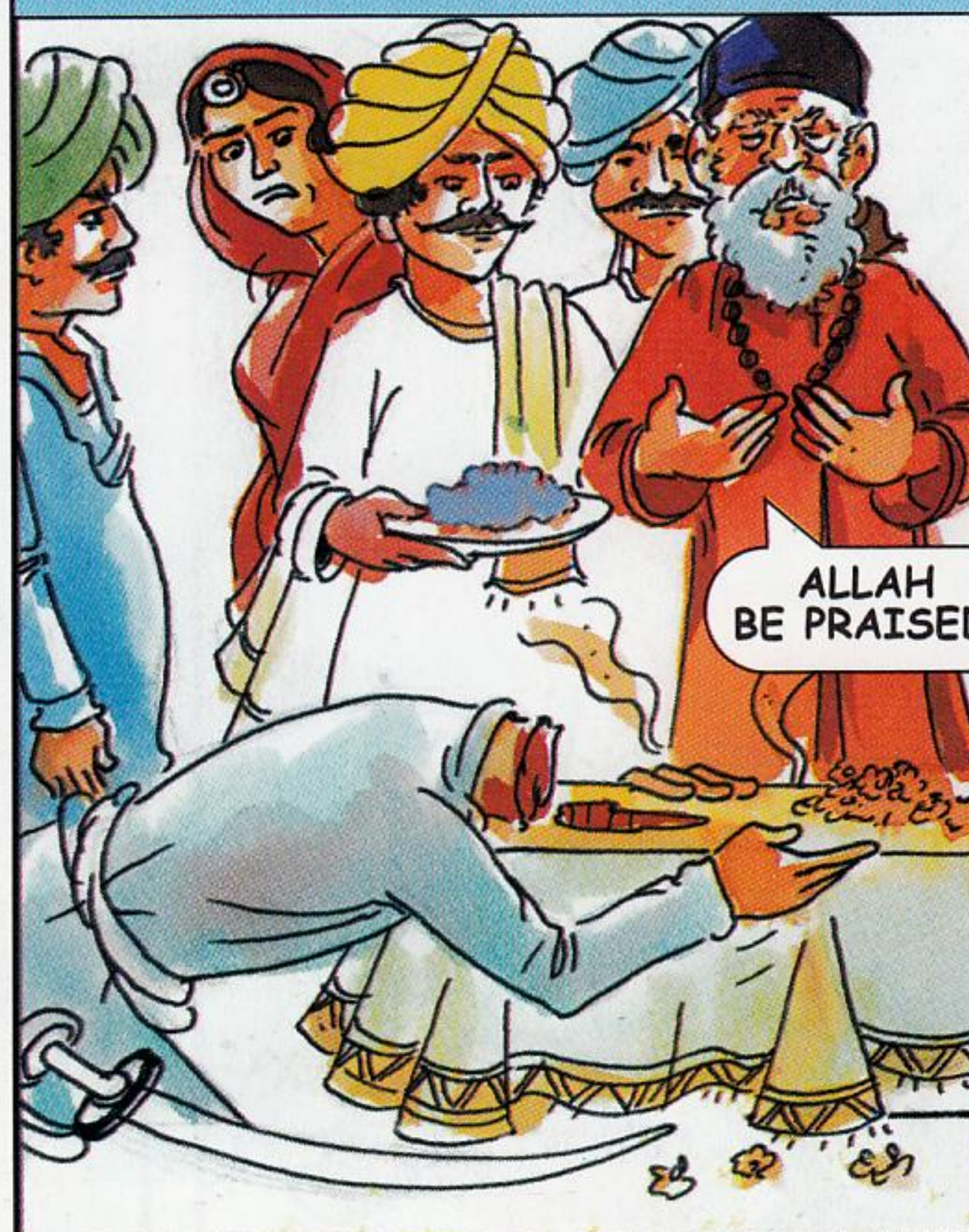


HAI ALLAH, HE MUST HAVE HAD A VIOLENT DEATH! GOD GRANT HIM PEACE. I KNOW WHAT TO DO...

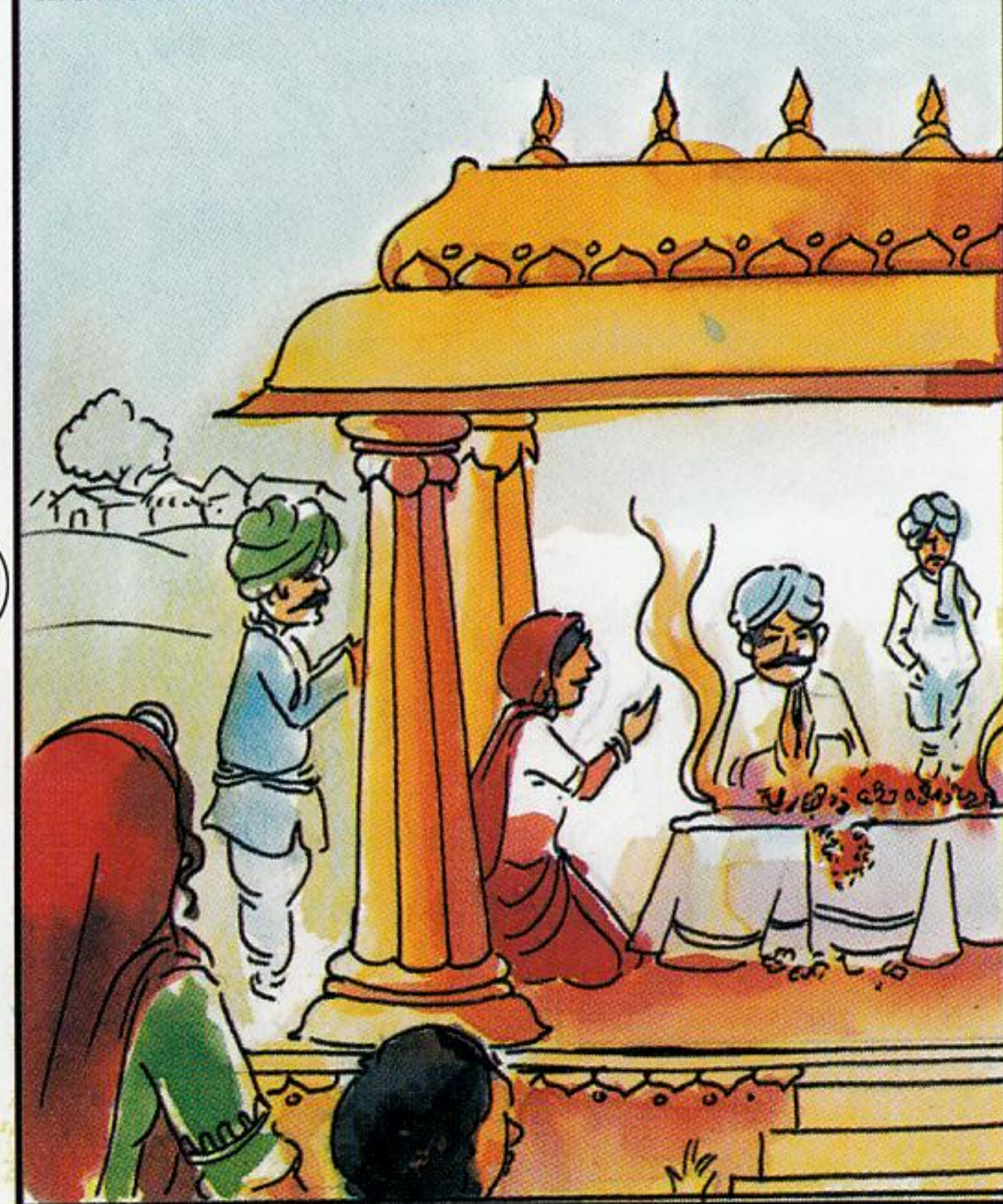
GULI<sup>8</sup>! GET SOME GULI AND THROW IT ON THIS TROUBLED SOUL!



AS SOON AS THE GULI WAS THROWN ON HIM DUNGAR SINGH'S BODY FELL INTO PEACEFUL STILLNESS ON THE MAZAAR.<sup>9</sup>



THE BRAVE RAJPUT JHUNJAR WAS CALLED **BUTO PIR** AND EVEN TODAY, THERE STANDS A MONUMENT TO HIS MEMORY IN KATHORI.



7. A headless warrior. 8. Indigo powder. Amongst Rajputs it is beleived that Devi Shakti or the Goddess leaves the frenzied body of the Jhunjar when guli powder is thrown on him. 9. Grave of a muslim saint

THE END



# BEHEAD AND GET RICH

IN THE ARID AND UNEMBELLISHED LANDSCAPE OF MADH PRADESH STOOD A LARGE AND MAGNIFICENT GOVARDHAN SMARAK<sup>1</sup>. IT'S INTRIGUING STRUCTURE WAS NOT ONLY DUE TO ITS ARCHITECTURAL INTRICACIES BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF THE INSCRIPTION ENGRAVED ON IT, WHICH READ 'BEHEAD AND GET RICH'.

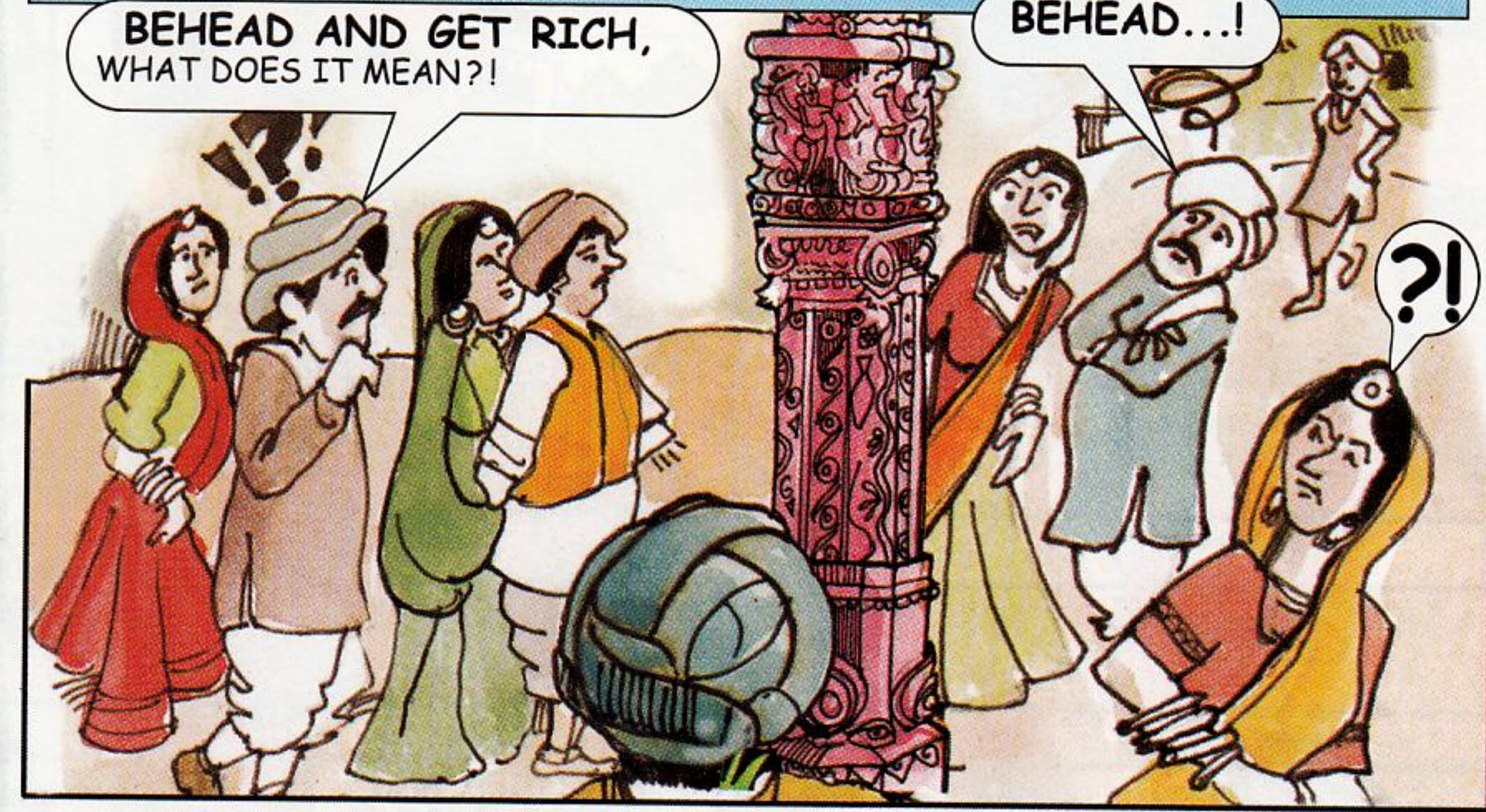
THIS INSCRIPTION WAS A SOURCE OF CONSTANT MYSTERY. BOTH THE LOCAL PEOPLE AND OUTSIDERS WERE ALWAYS TRYING TO DECIPHER IT.

BEHEAD AND GET RICH, WHAT DOES IT MEAN?!

BEHEAD...!

?!

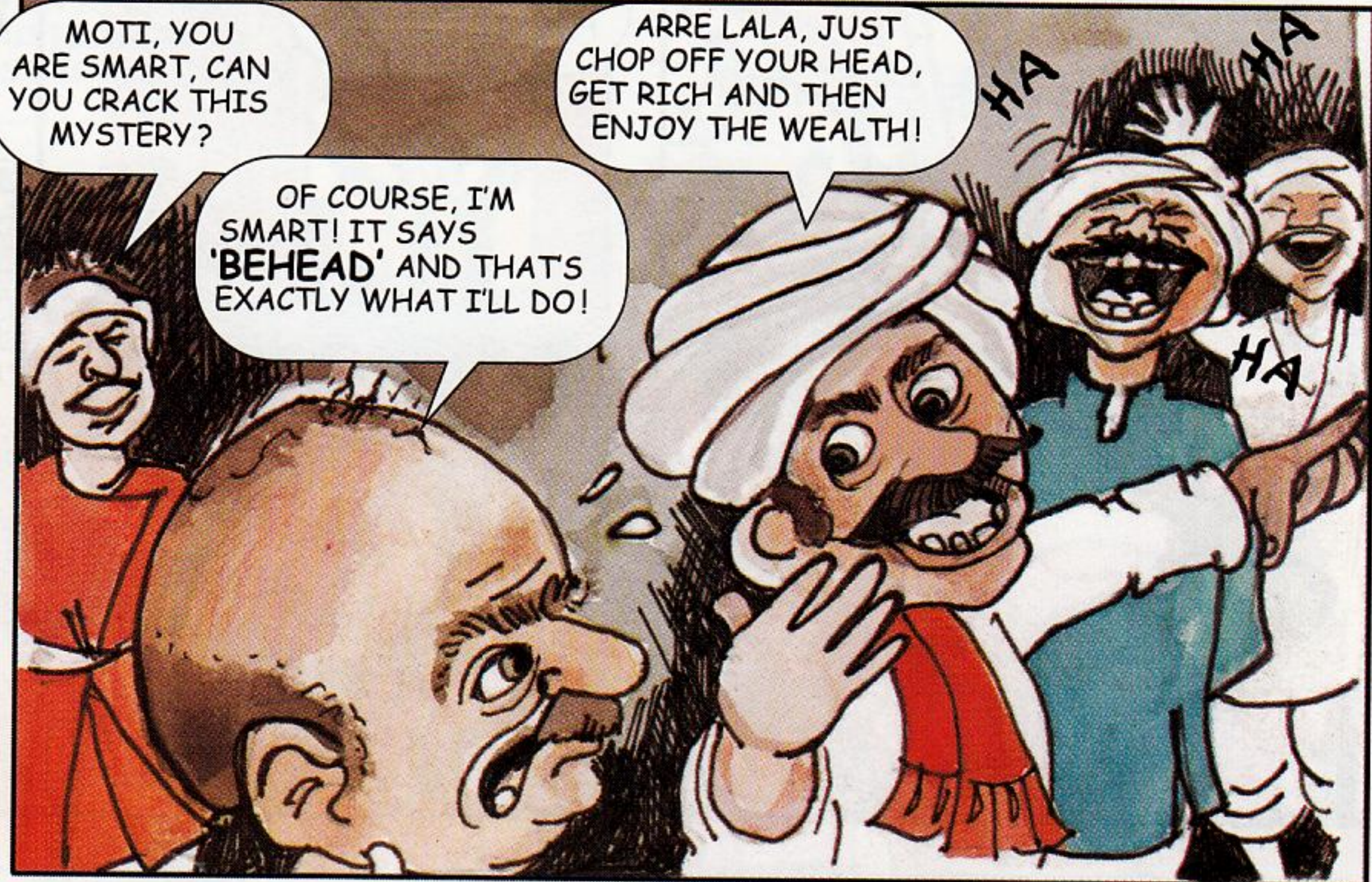
BEHEAD AND GET RICH!



MOTI, YOU ARE SMART, CAN YOU CRACK THIS MYSTERY?

ARRE LALA, JUST CHOP OFF YOUR HEAD, GET RICH AND THEN ENJOY THE WEALTH!

OF COURSE, I'M SMART! IT SAYS 'BEHEAD' AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I'LL DO!

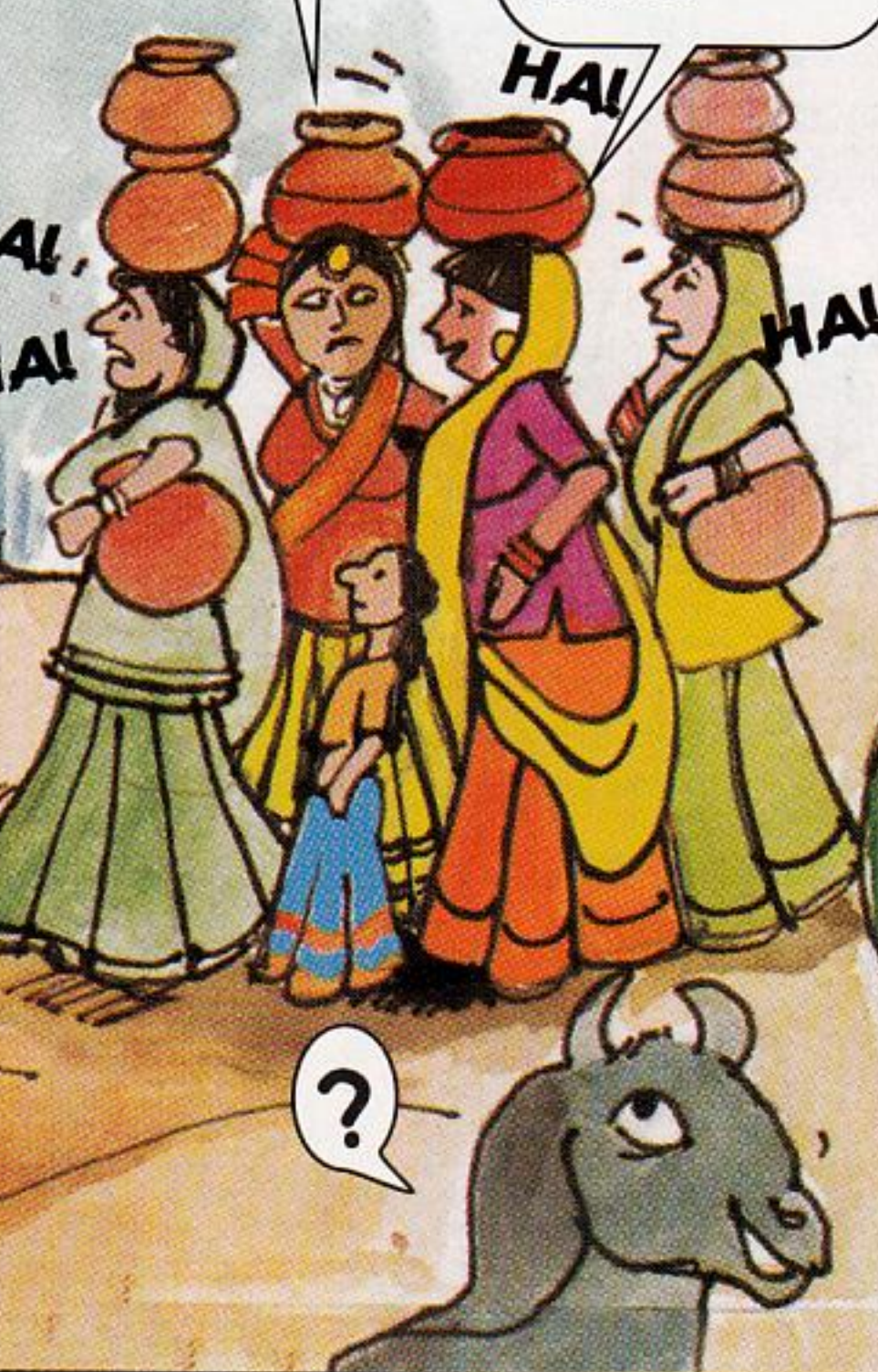


THE WOMEN HAD THEIR OWN AXE TO GRIND.

TEEJAN, WHO SHALL WE BEHEAD? MY DRUNKEN HUSBAND OR YOUR'S?

MINE DEFINITELY... HA! HA

MAYBE WE CAN GET RICH ENOUGH TO EAT A FEW GOOD MEALS BEFORE WE DIE! AND MY LADO CAN GO TO SCHOOL... SIGH!



1. A smarak is a monument constructed to commemorate something. The Govardhan Smarak is associated with cows and they are very important stone structures in this region.

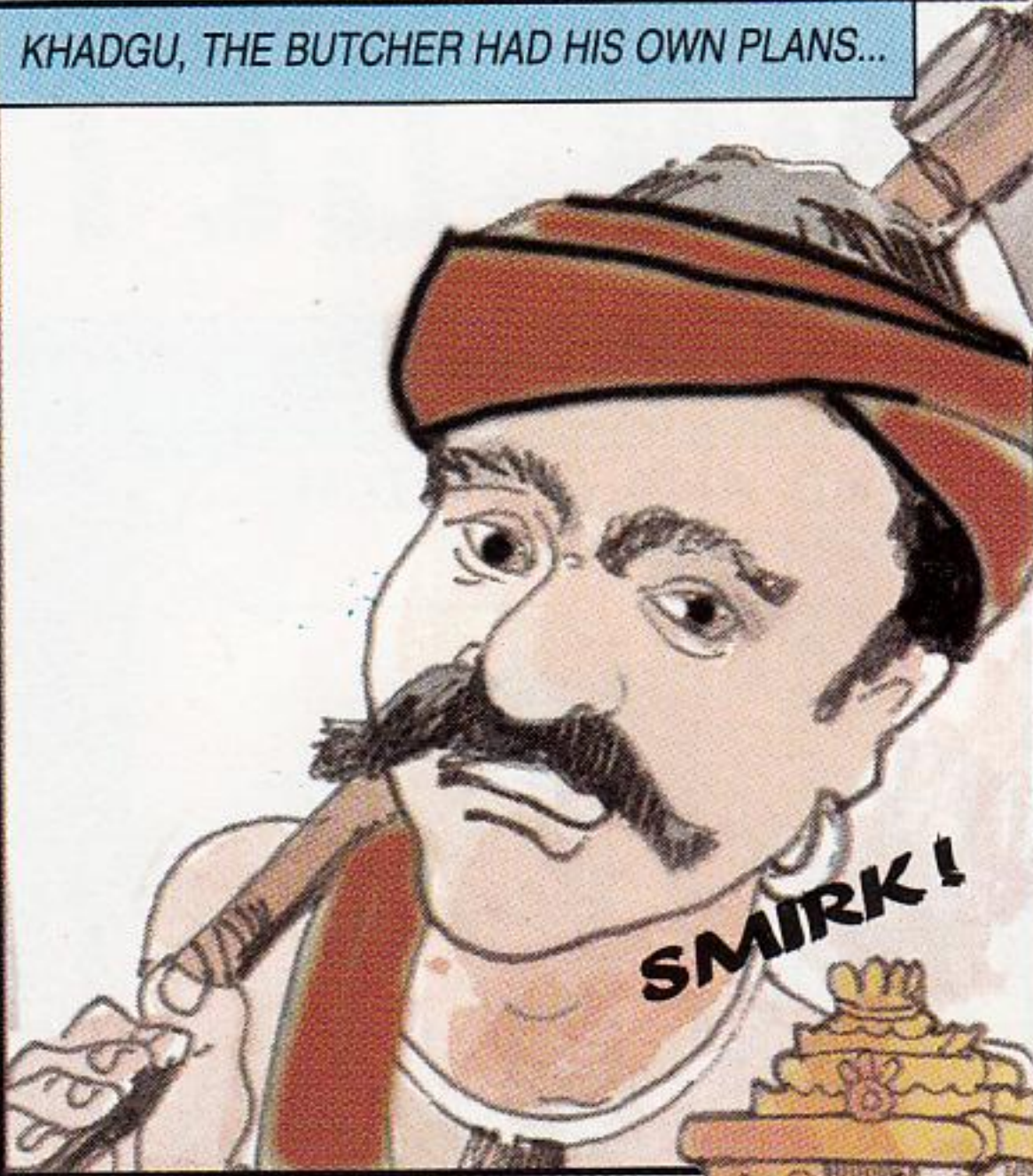


THE LALA WAS DETERMINED.

CALL THE BUTCHER! I WANT MY HEAD CHOPPED OFF!



KHADGU, THE BUTCHER HAD HIS OWN PLANS...



ARRE, KHADGU, DO IT QUICK! SO THAT I CAN GET RICH INSTANTLY... ANOTHER PAWN SHOP, A MONEY LENDING OUTFIT.

Whosh!

I'VE ALWAYS DREAMT OF A FANCY BUTCHER SHOP! IT SAYS 'BEHEAD' DOESN'T IT? SO GOODBYE LALAJI...

THERE WERE MANY LIKE LALAJI.

SO MANY OF US HAVE DIED, AND NONE THE RICHER FOR IT.

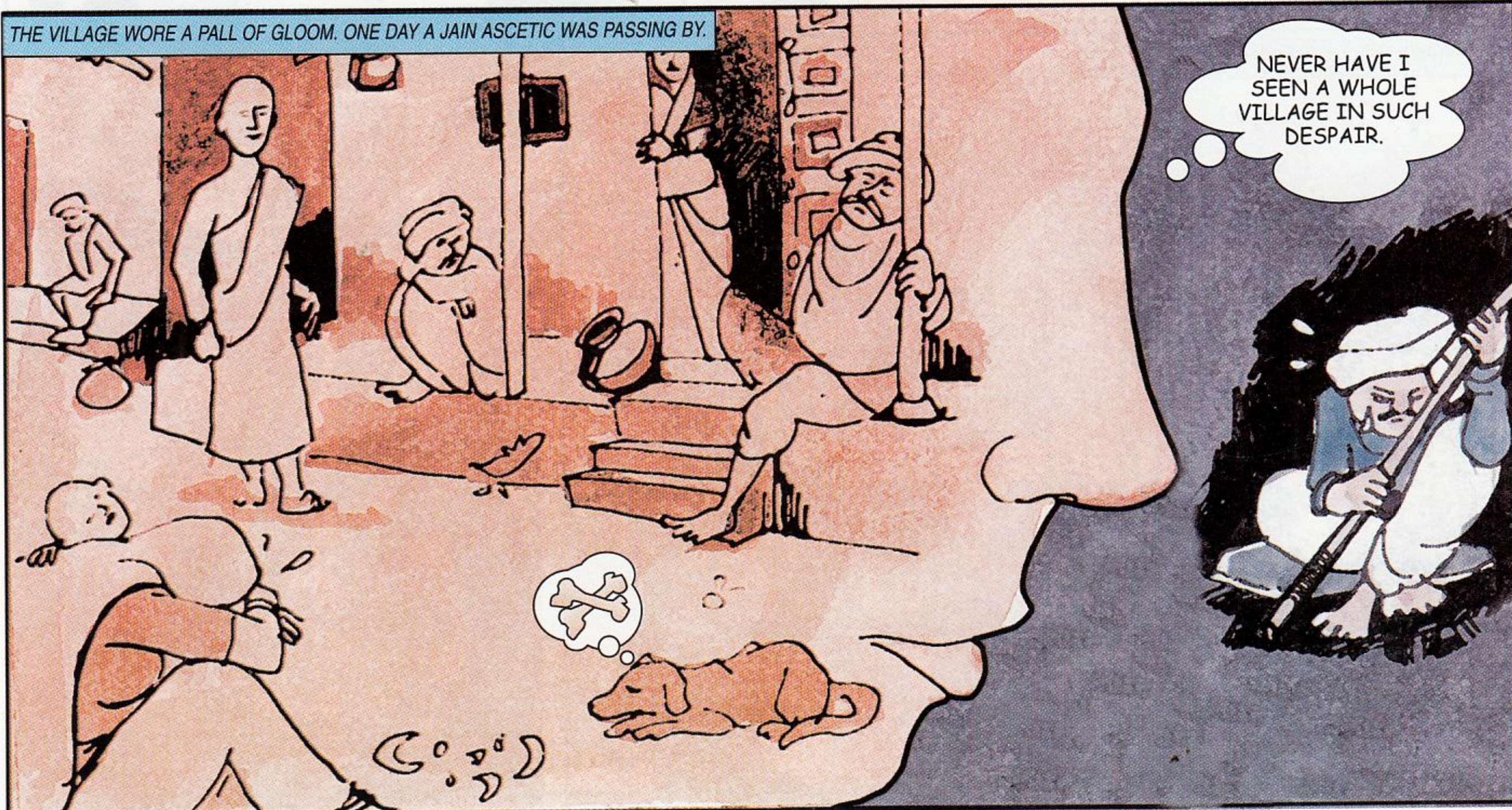


LET'S BURN DOWN THIS EVIL PILLAR.

SOB! CALL THE RUDALI!

SOB! IT'S A CURSE!

THE VILLAGE WORE A PALL OF GLOOM. ONE DAY A JAIN ASCETIC WAS PASSING BY.



NEVER HAVE I SEEN A WHOLE VILLAGE IN SUCH DESPAIR.



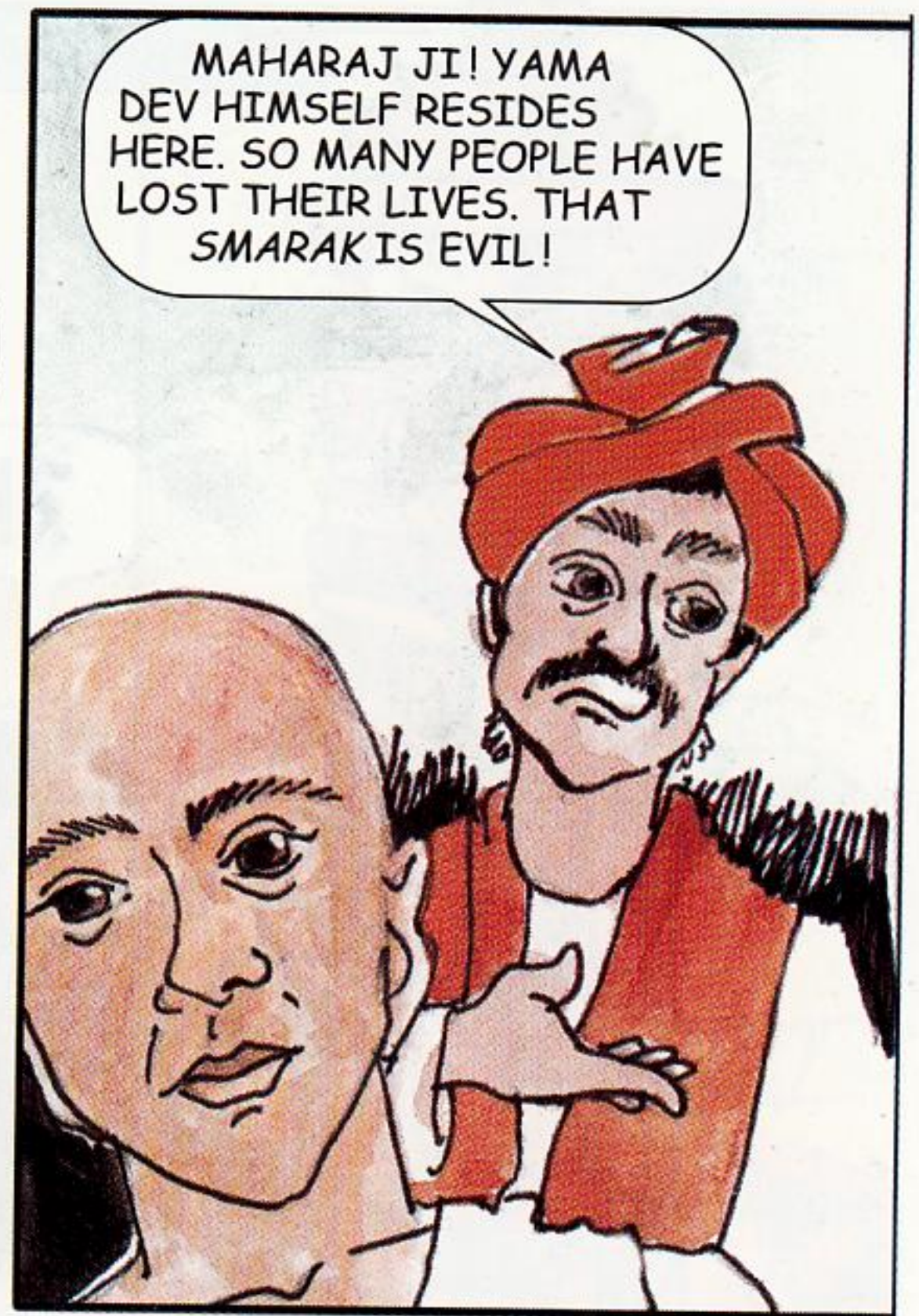


PERHAPS HE CAN INTERPRET THE INSCRIPTION!

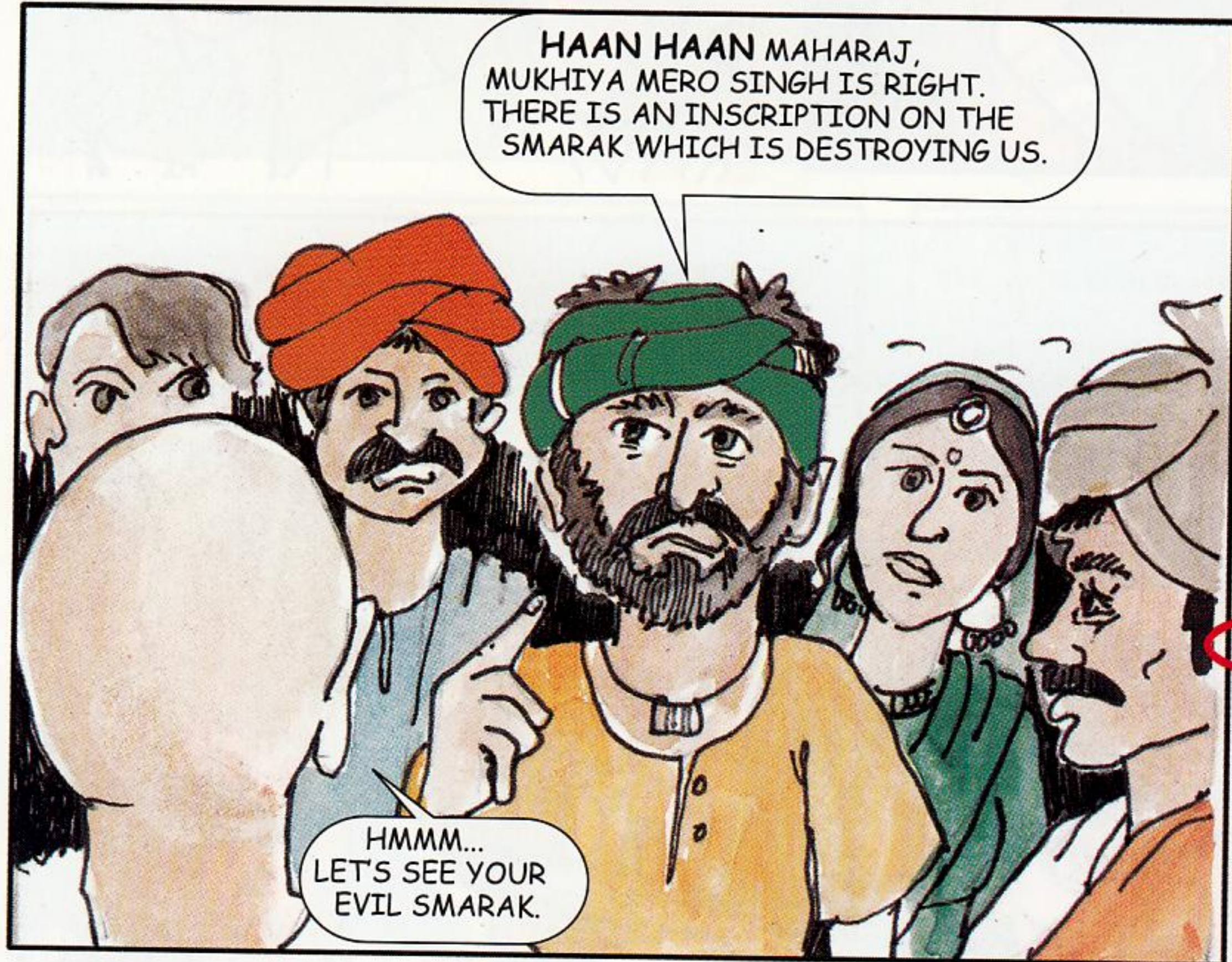
LOOK, A MONK!

HE'S A LEARNED MAN!

MAYBE HE HAS BEEN SENT TO US BY THE SEVEN JOGINIS...

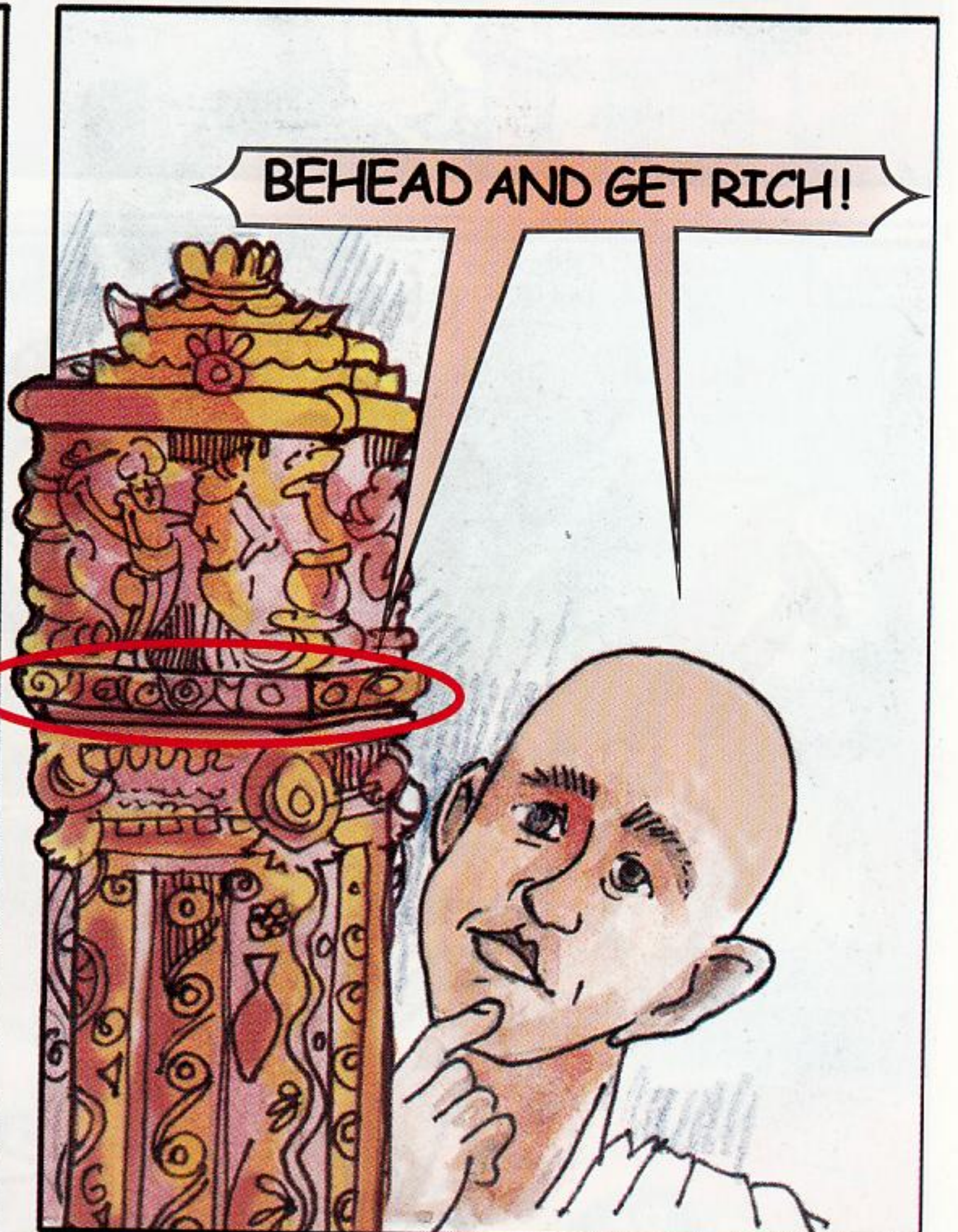


MAHARAJ JI! YAMA DEV HIMSELF RESIDES HERE. SO MANY PEOPLE HAVE LOST THEIR LIVES. THAT SMARAK IS EVIL!



HAAN HAAN MAHARAJ, MUKHIYA MERO SINGH IS RIGHT. THERE IS AN INSCRIPTION ON THE SMARAK WHICH IS DESTROYING US.

HMMM... LET'S SEE YOUR EVIL SMARAK.

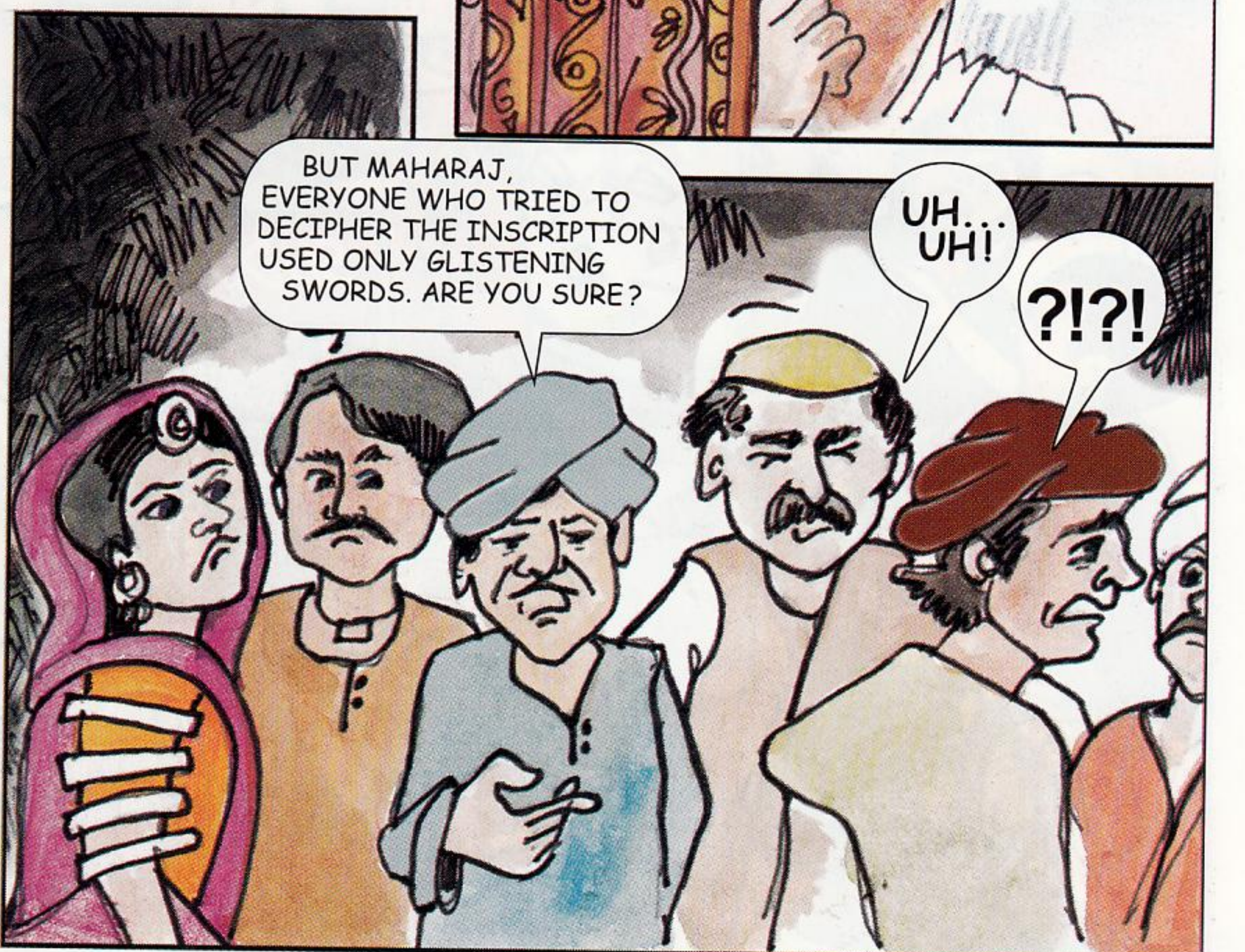


BEHEAD AND GET RICH!



SOON... SEND FOR THE VILLAGE MASONS. ASK THEM TO BRING THEIR TOOLS.

MASONS? TOOLS?

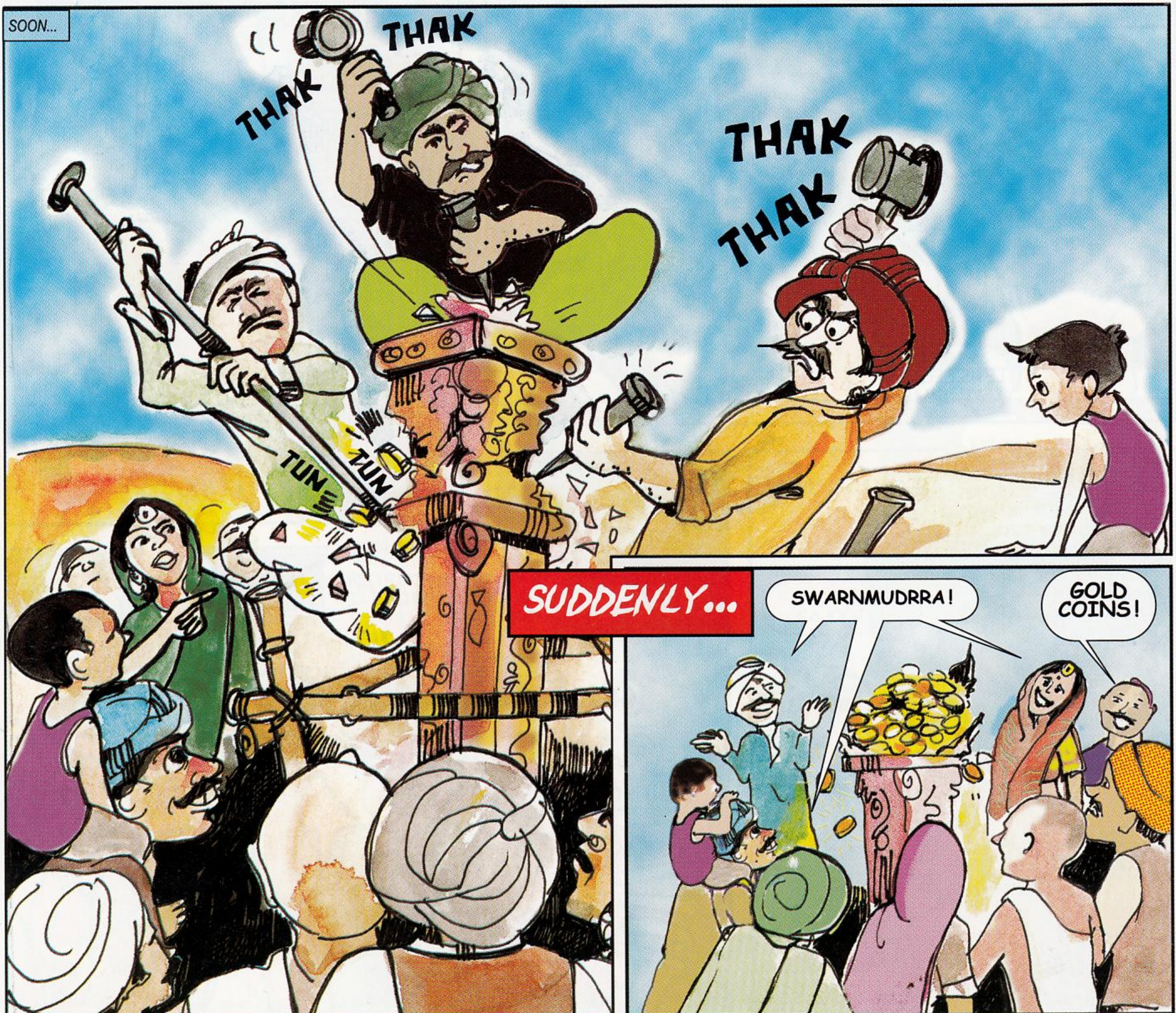
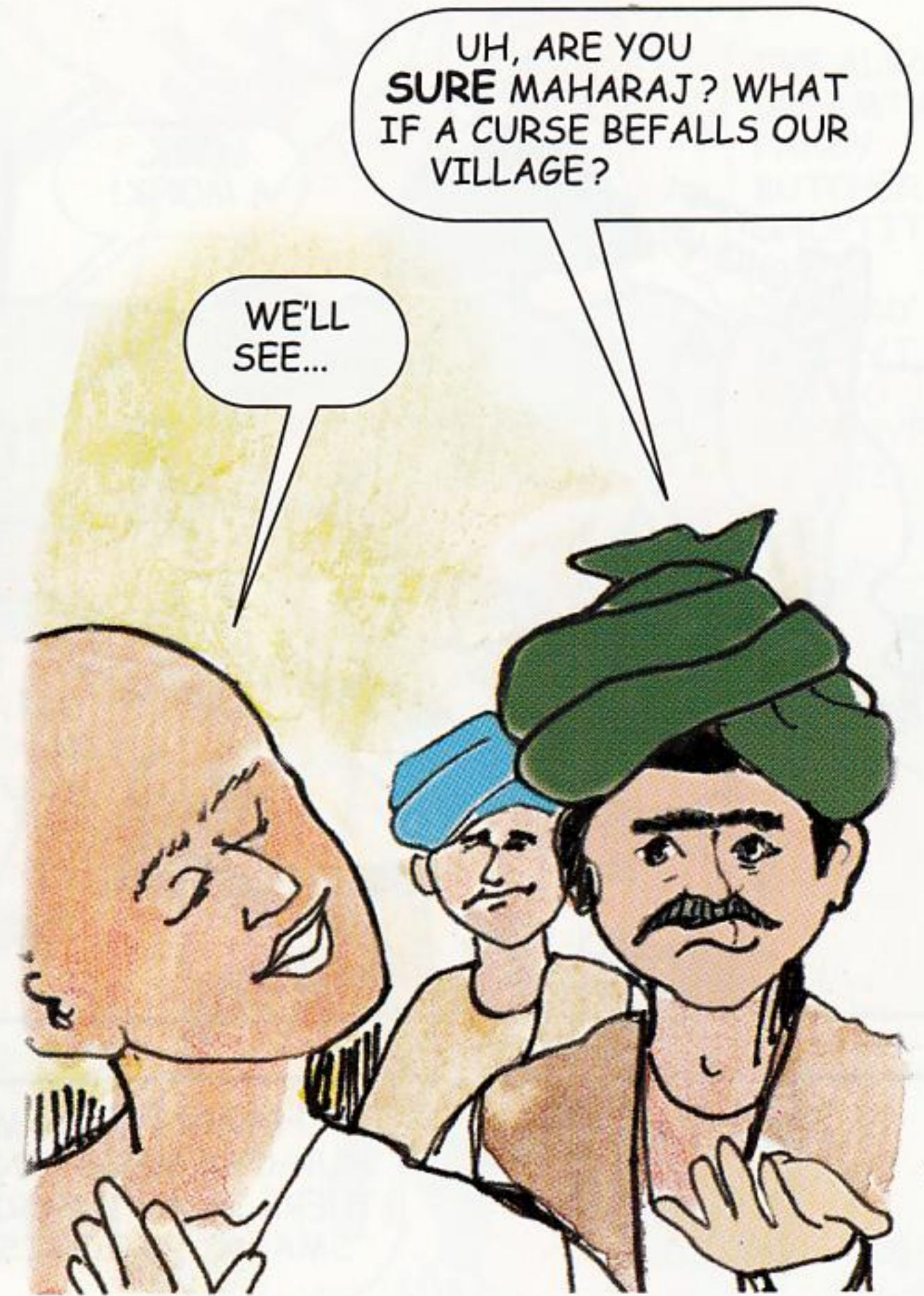
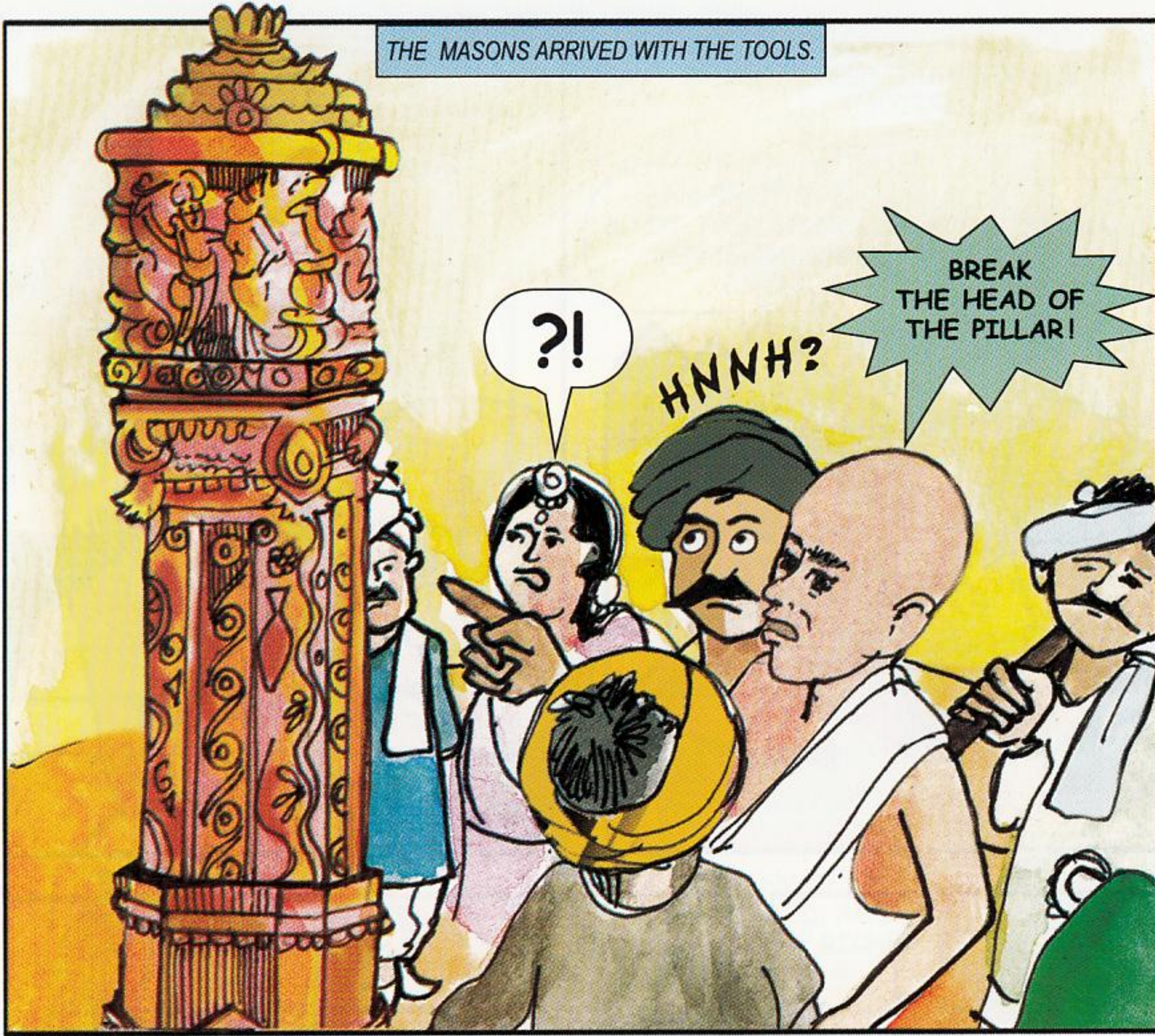


BUT MAHARAJ, EVERYONE WHO TRIED TO DECIPHER THE INSCRIPTION USED ONLY GLISTENING SWORDS. ARE YOU SURE?

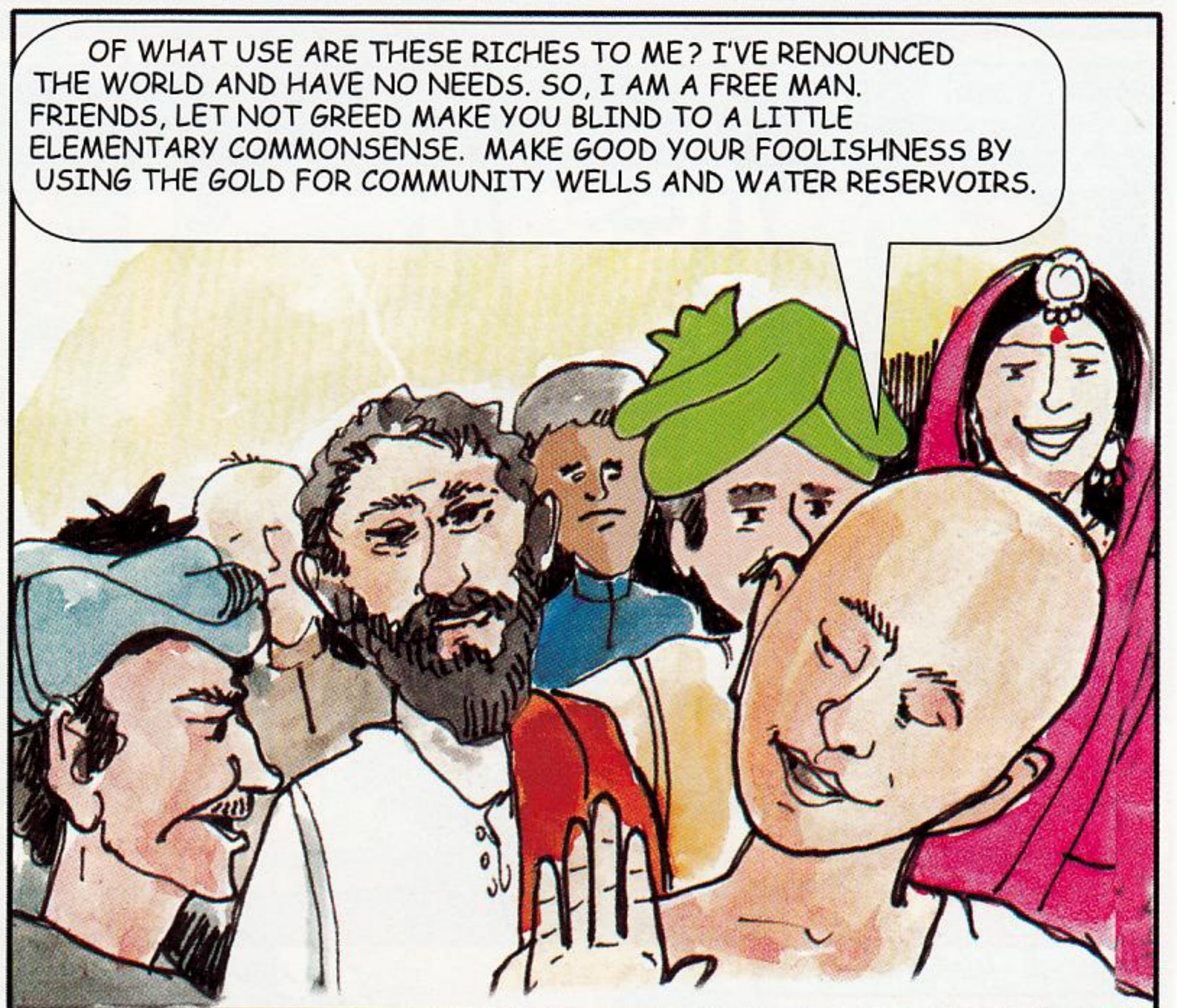
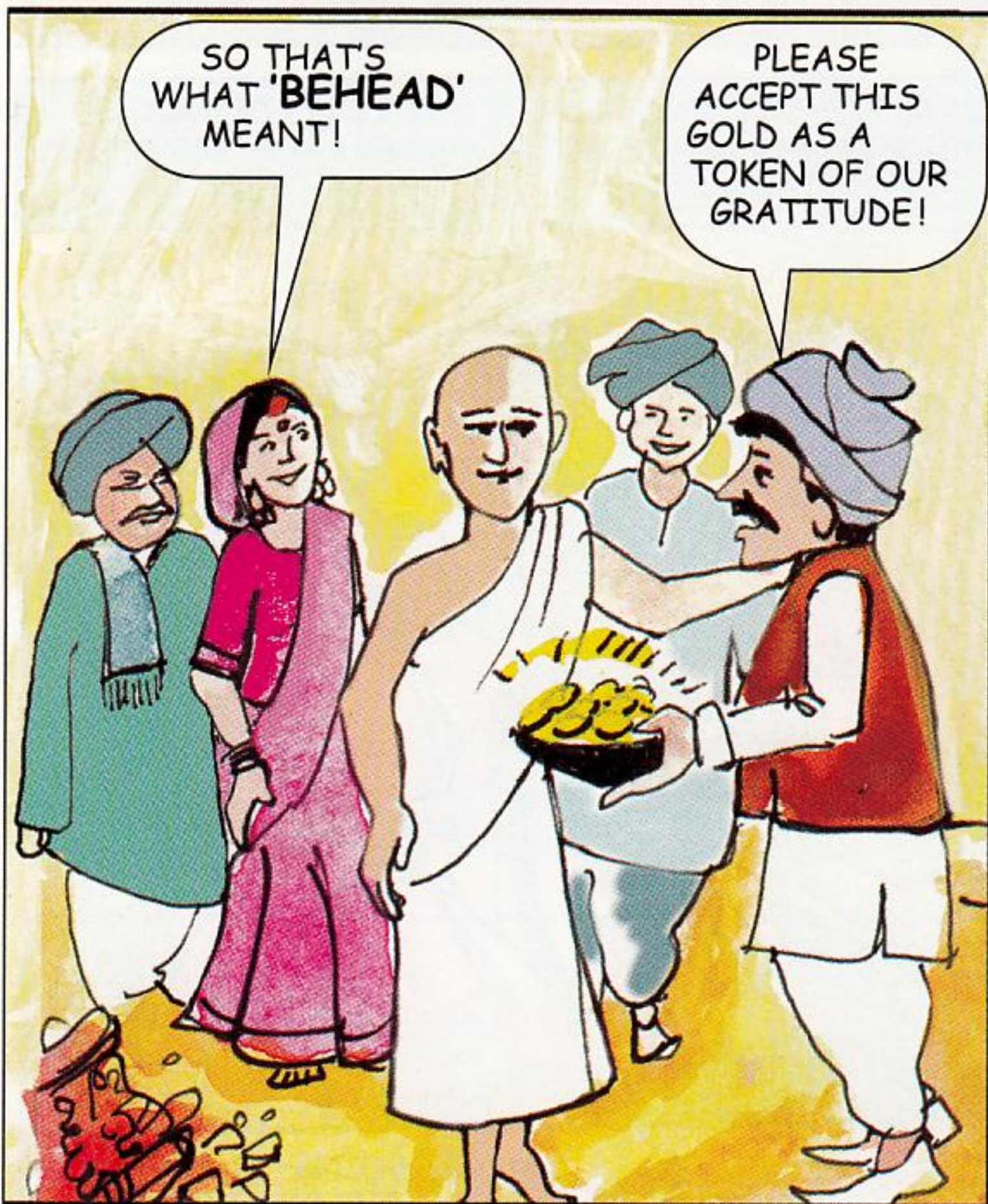
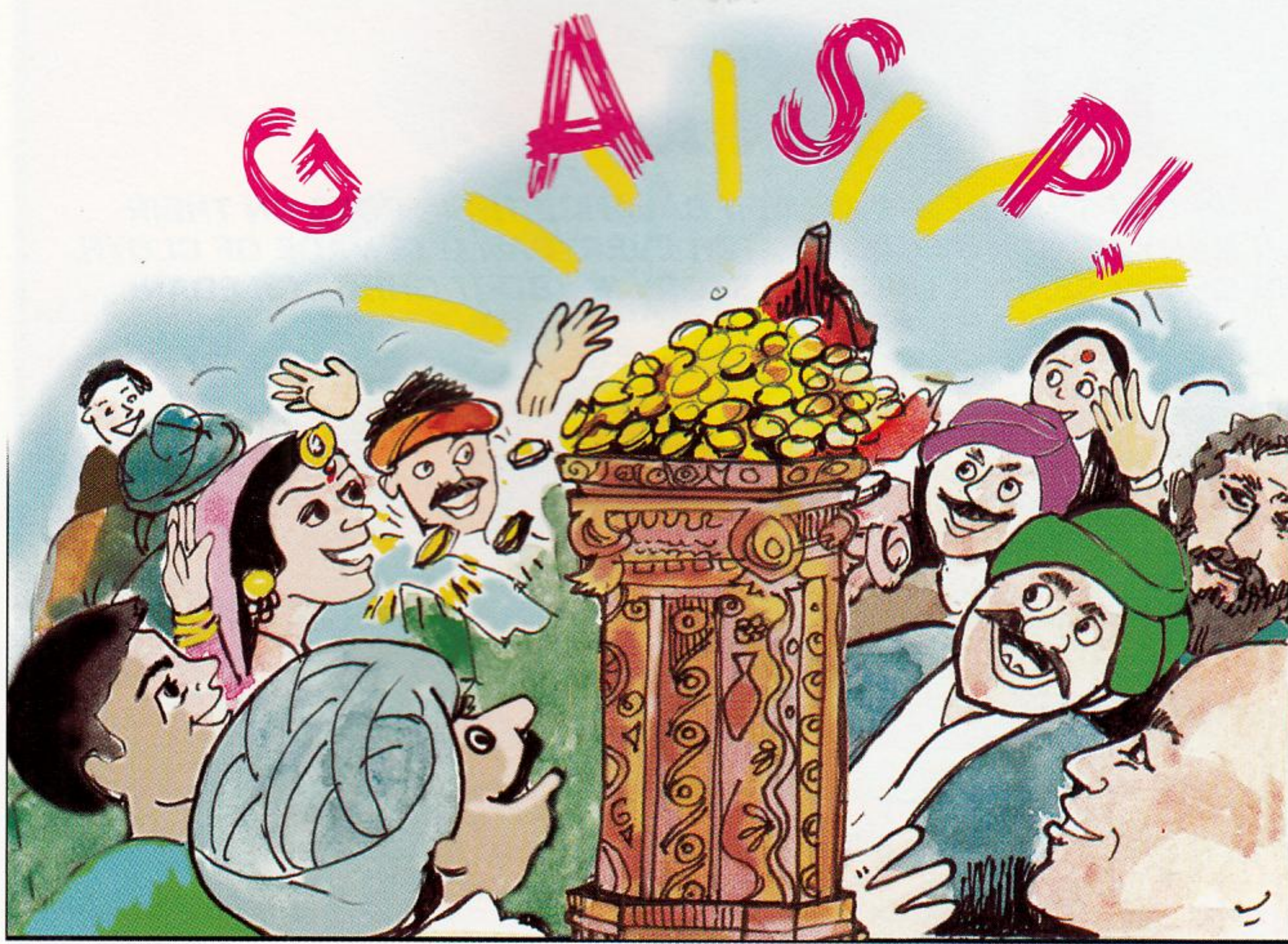
UH.. UH!

?!?!?

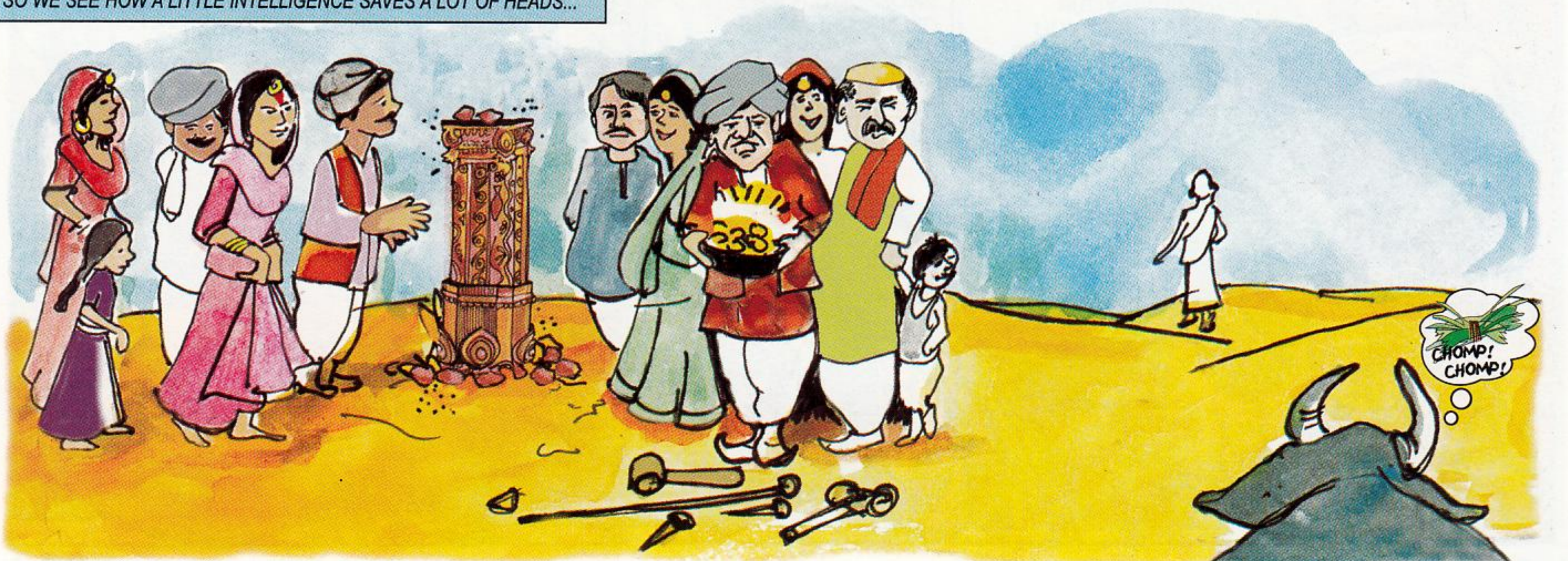








SO WE SEE HOW A LITTLE INTELLIGENCE SAVES A LOT OF HEADS...



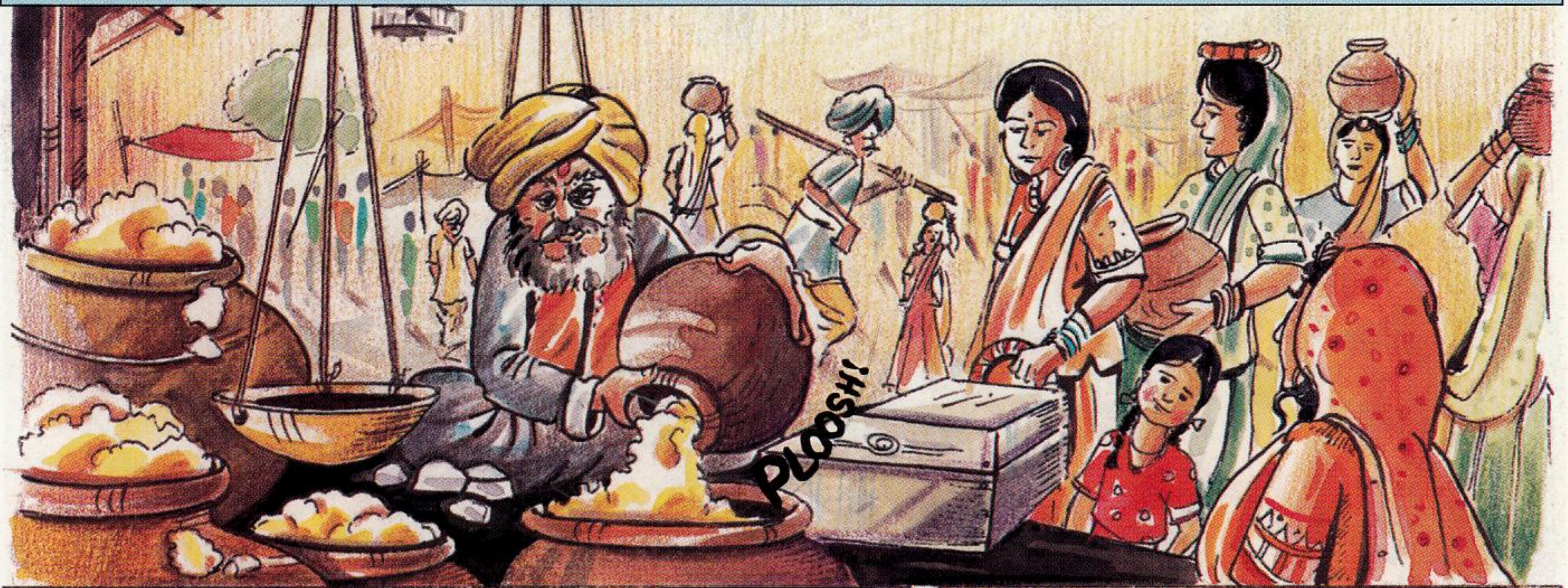


# EDANI

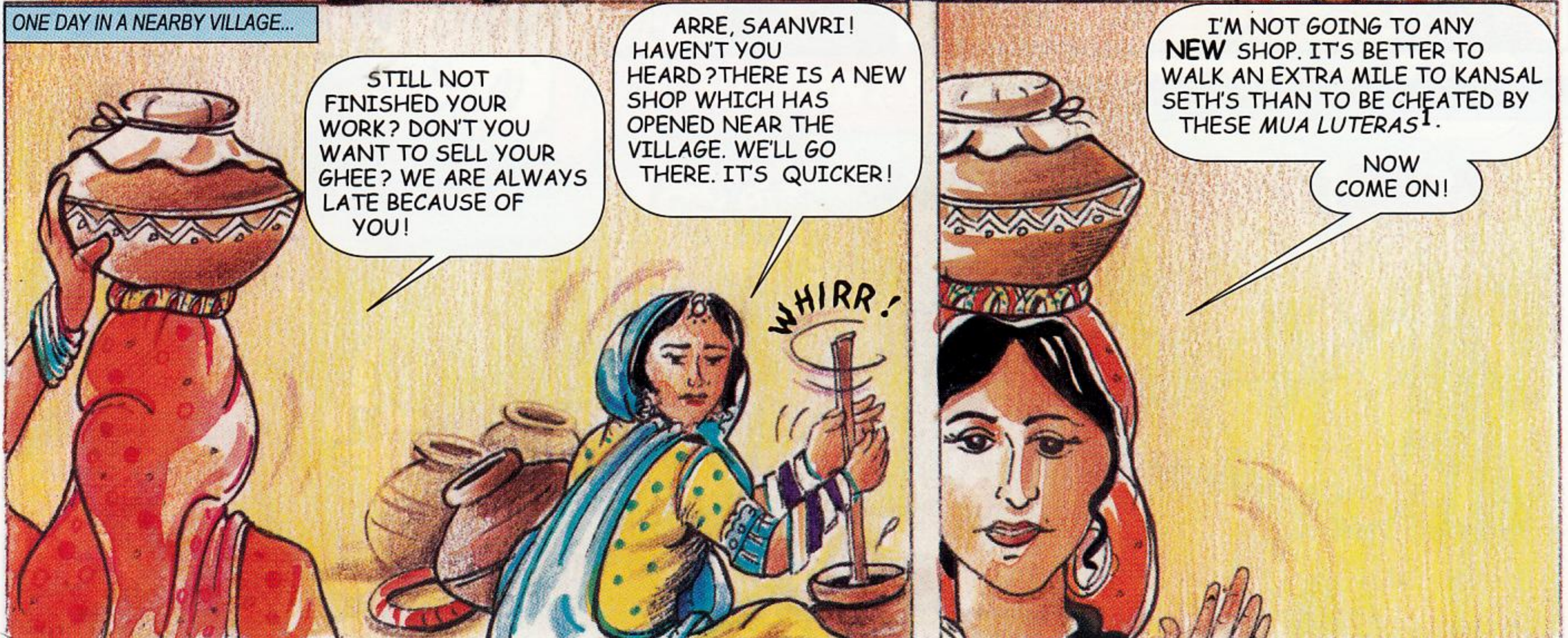
'EDANI' IS THE ROUND SUPPORT THAT HELPS WOMEN BALANCE THEIR POTS ON THEIR HEADS AS THEY WALK FOR MANY MILES TO FETCH WATER EVERYDAY. IT IS MADE OF CLOTH, ROPE OR A SPECIAL KIND OF GRASS. THIS UNUSUAL STORY IS ABOUT ONE SUCH EDANI...



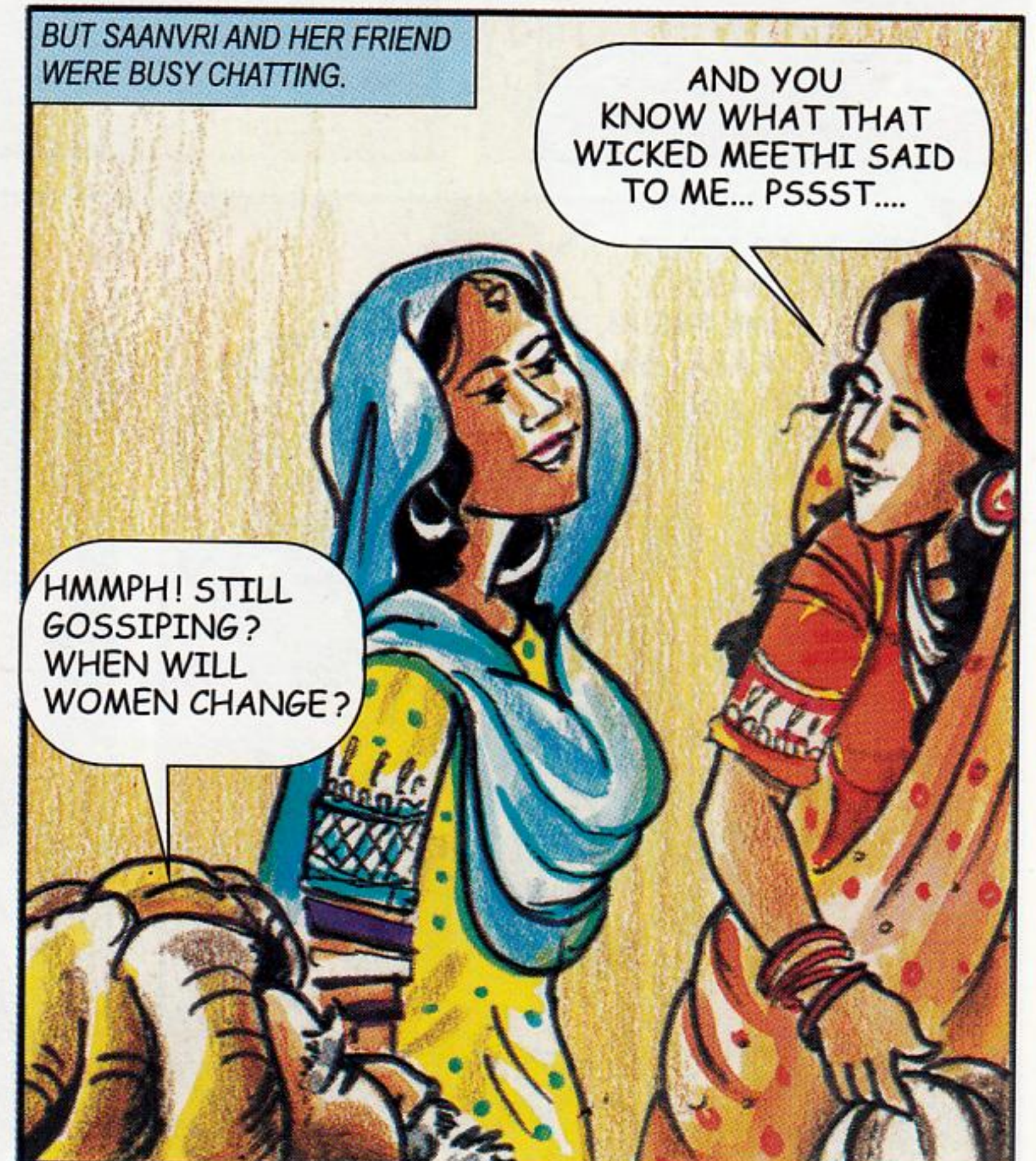
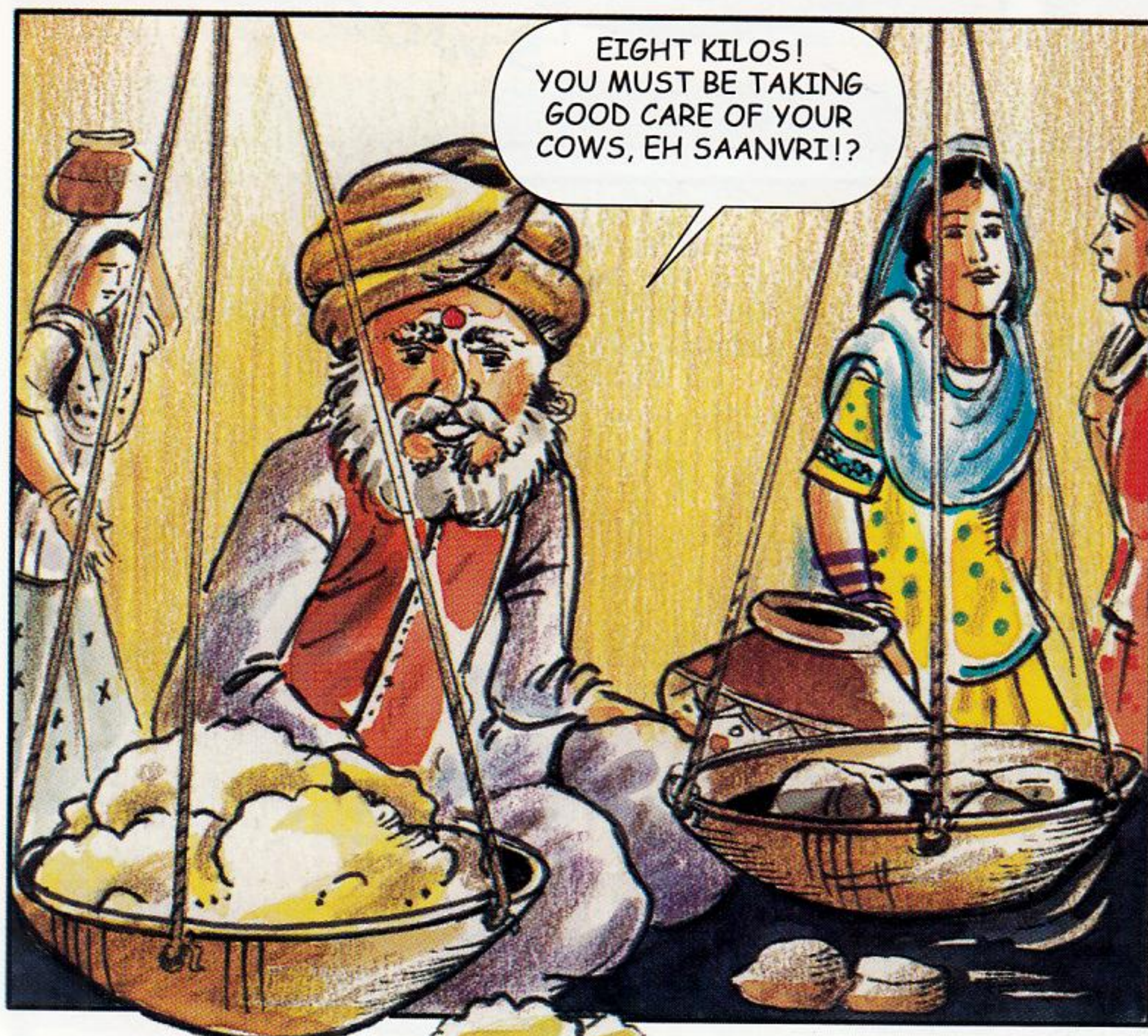
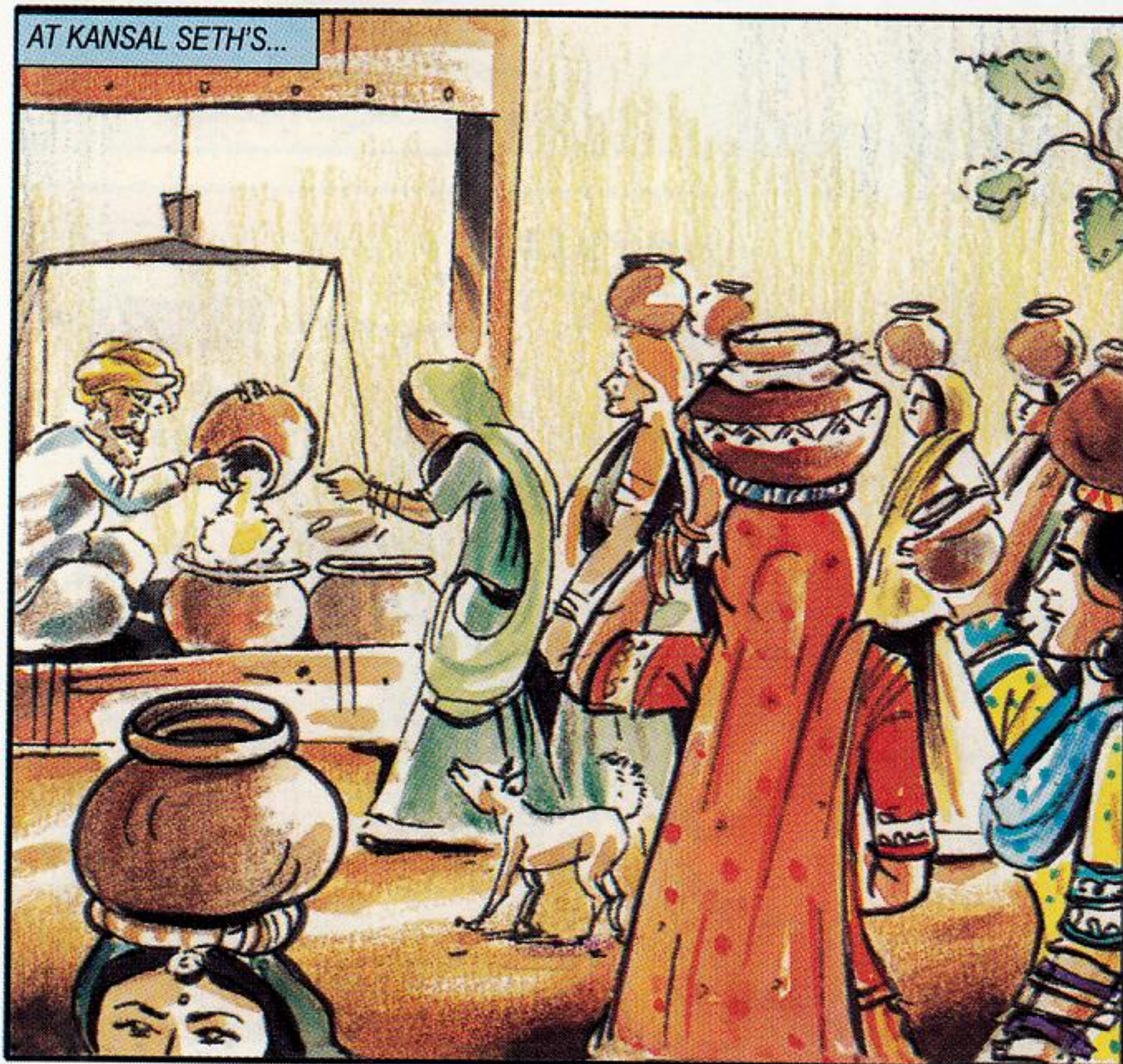
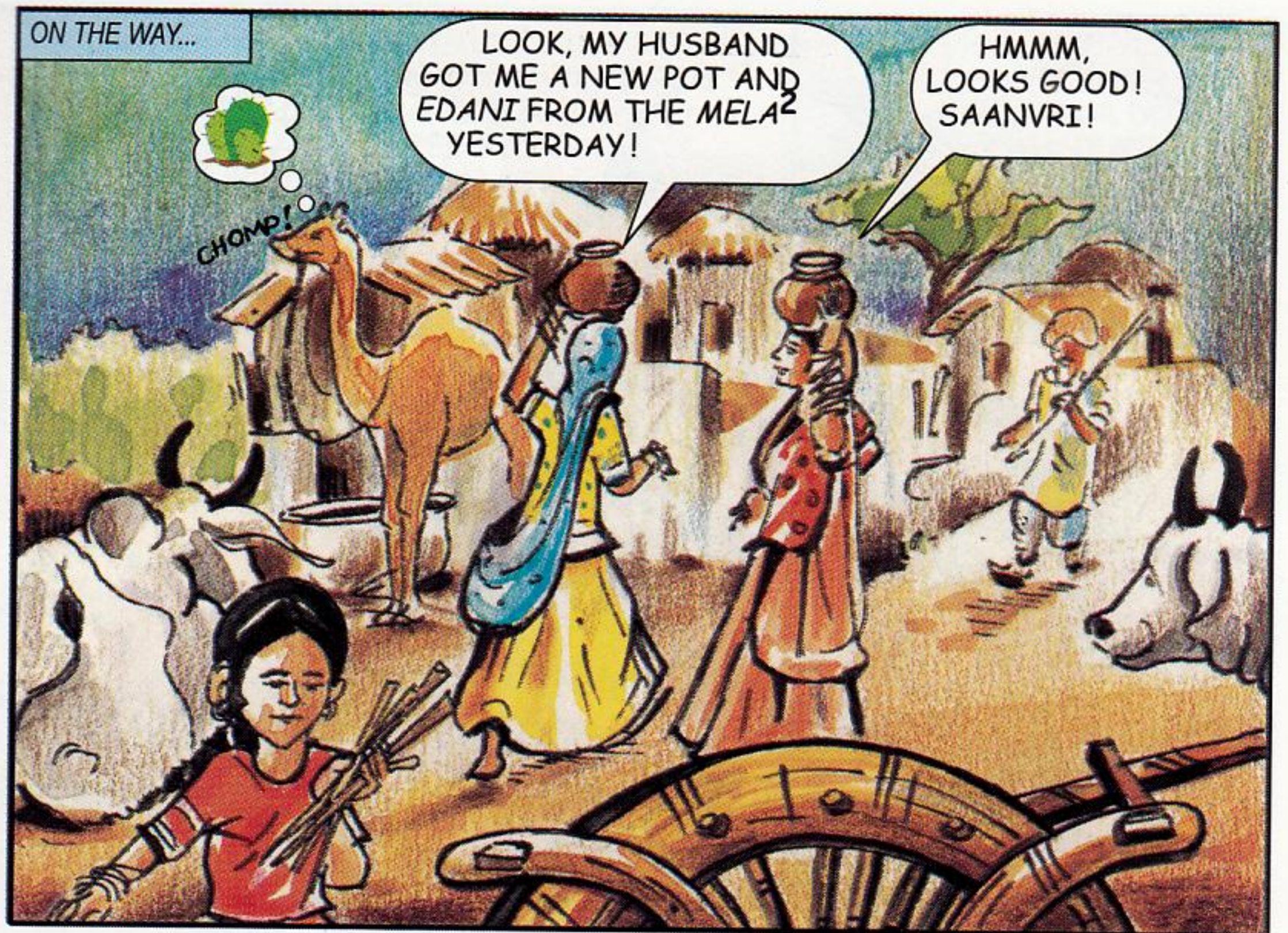
IN MADH PRADESH, THERE LIVED A JAIN MERCHANT CALLED KANSAL SETH. HE BOUGHT AND SOLD GHEE. KANSAL SETH WAS FAMOUS IN THE REGION FOR NOT ONLY HIS RICHES BUT ALSO HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. MEN AND WOMEN, FROM FAR OFF VILLAGES CAME TO SELL GHEE TO HIM, AS THEY KNEW HE WOULD GIVE THEM A FAIR PRICE. BESIDES HE WAS WELL KNOWN FOR HIS GENEROUS AND CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS HIS COMMUNITY.



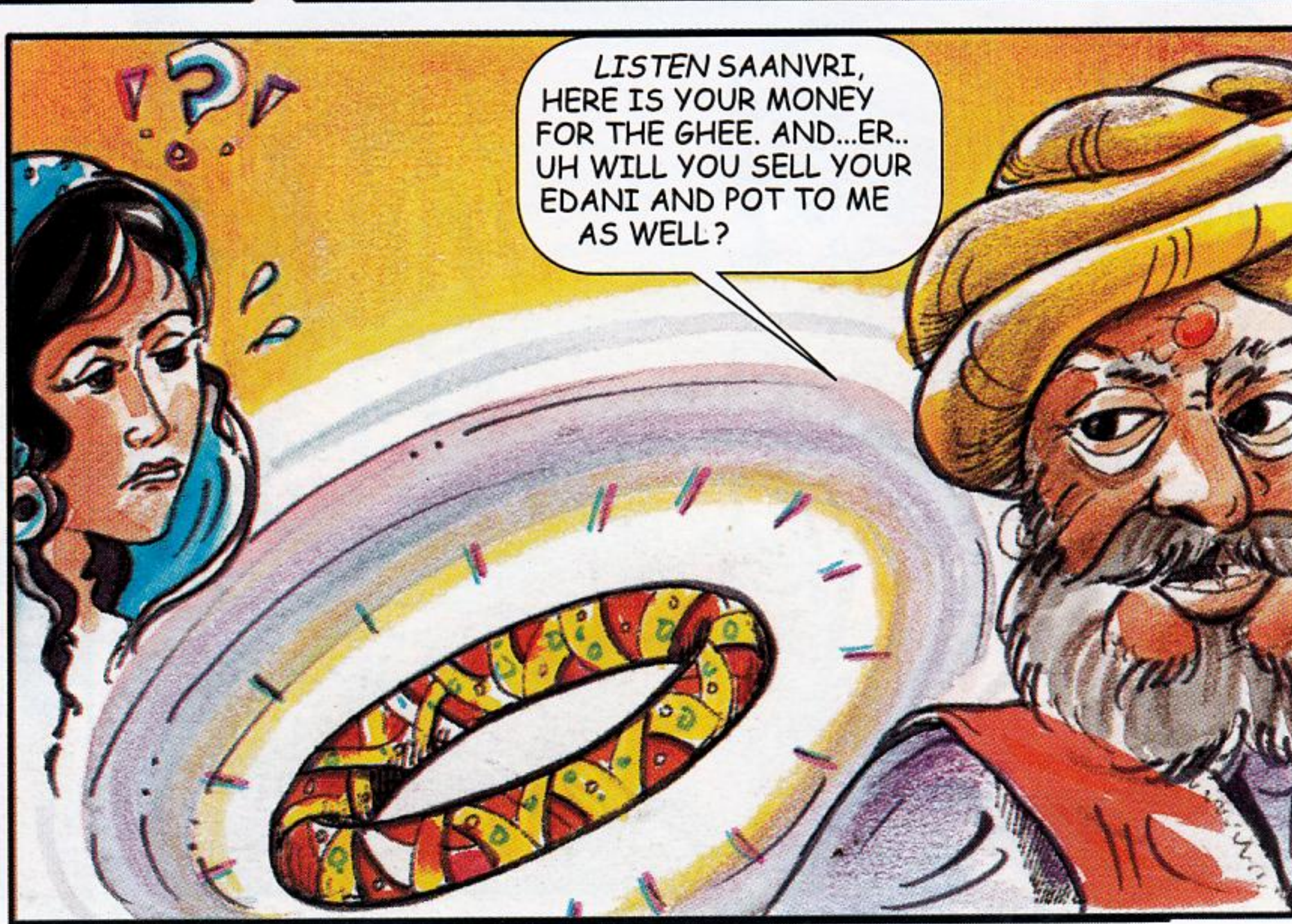
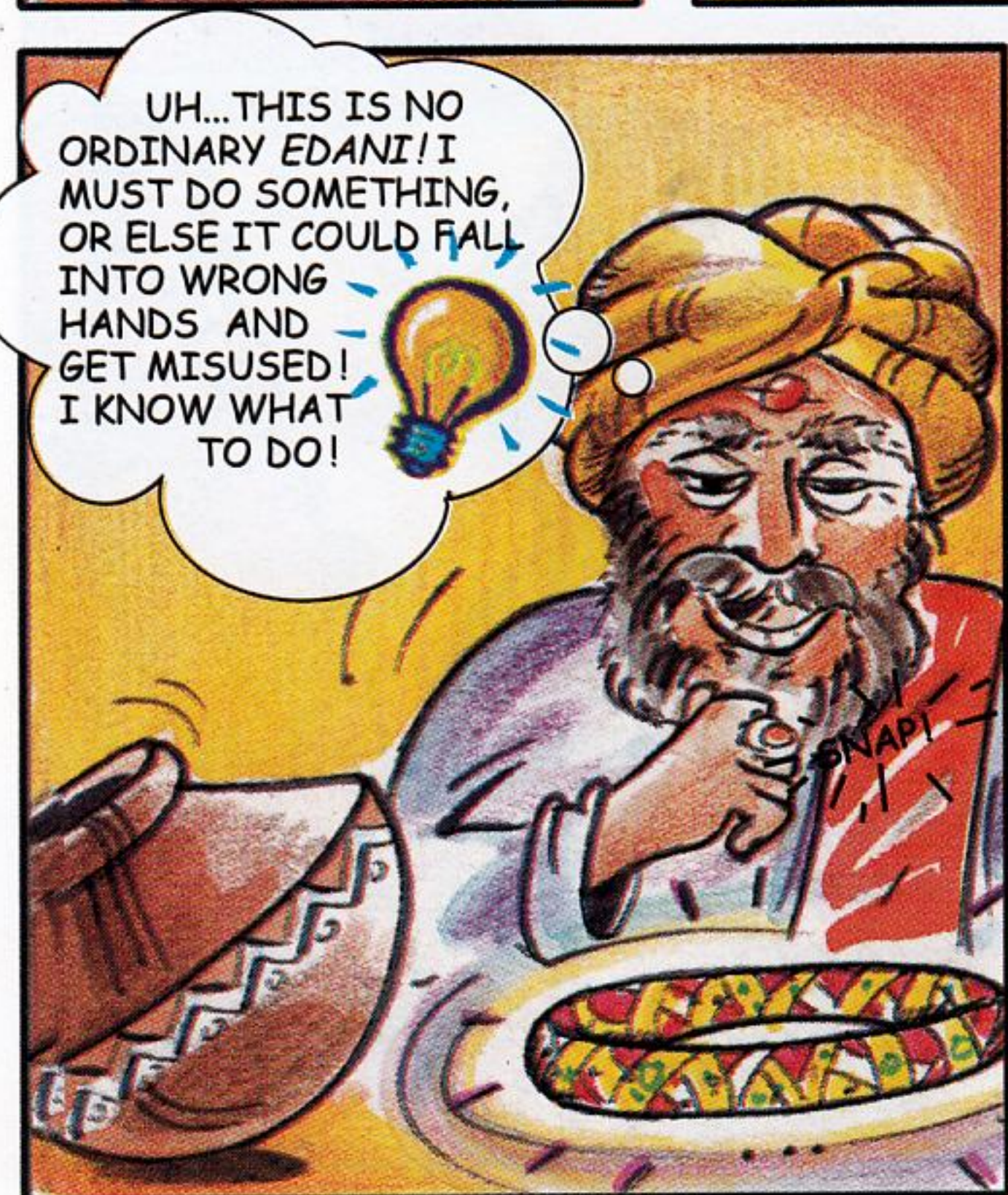
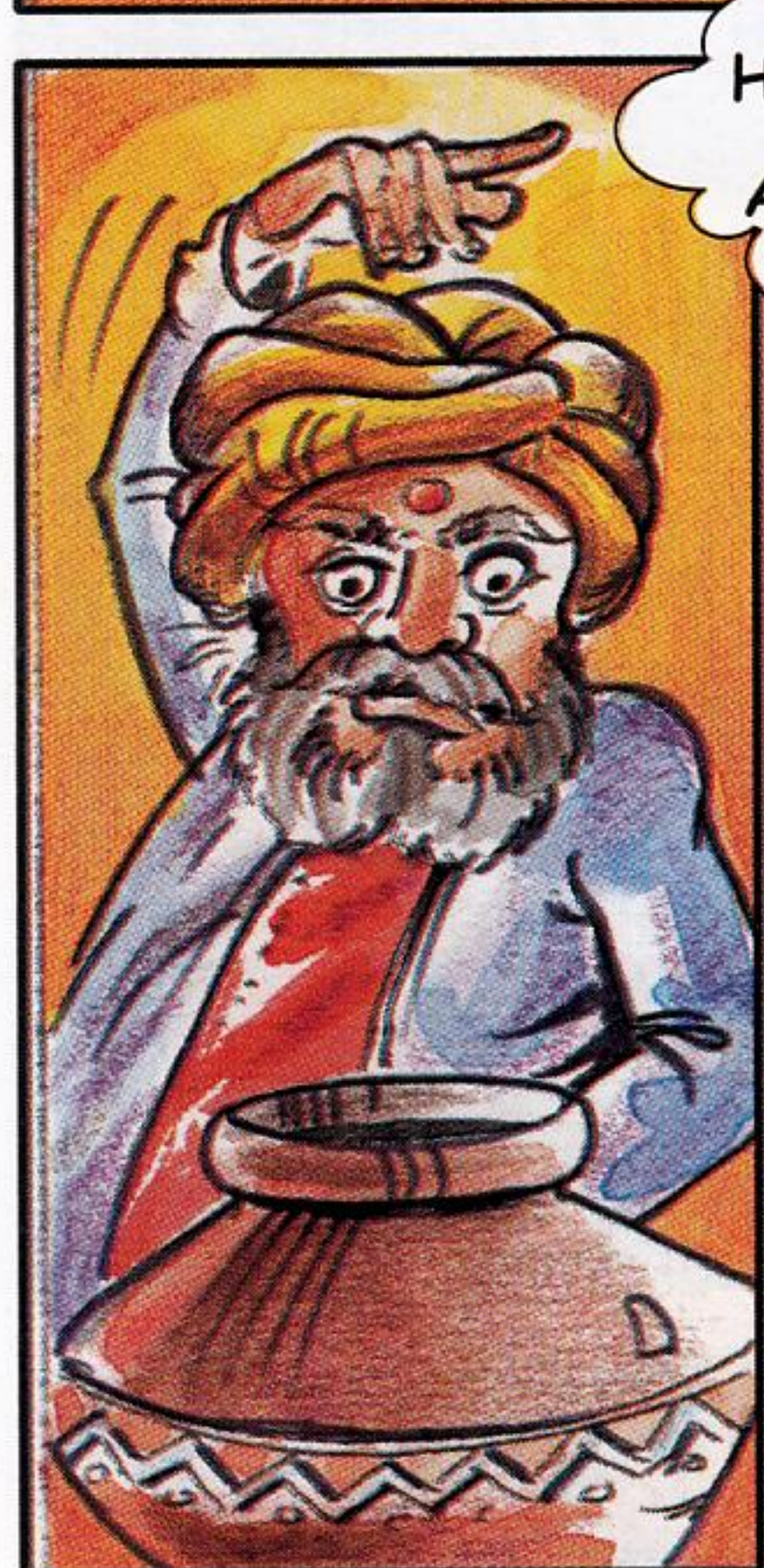
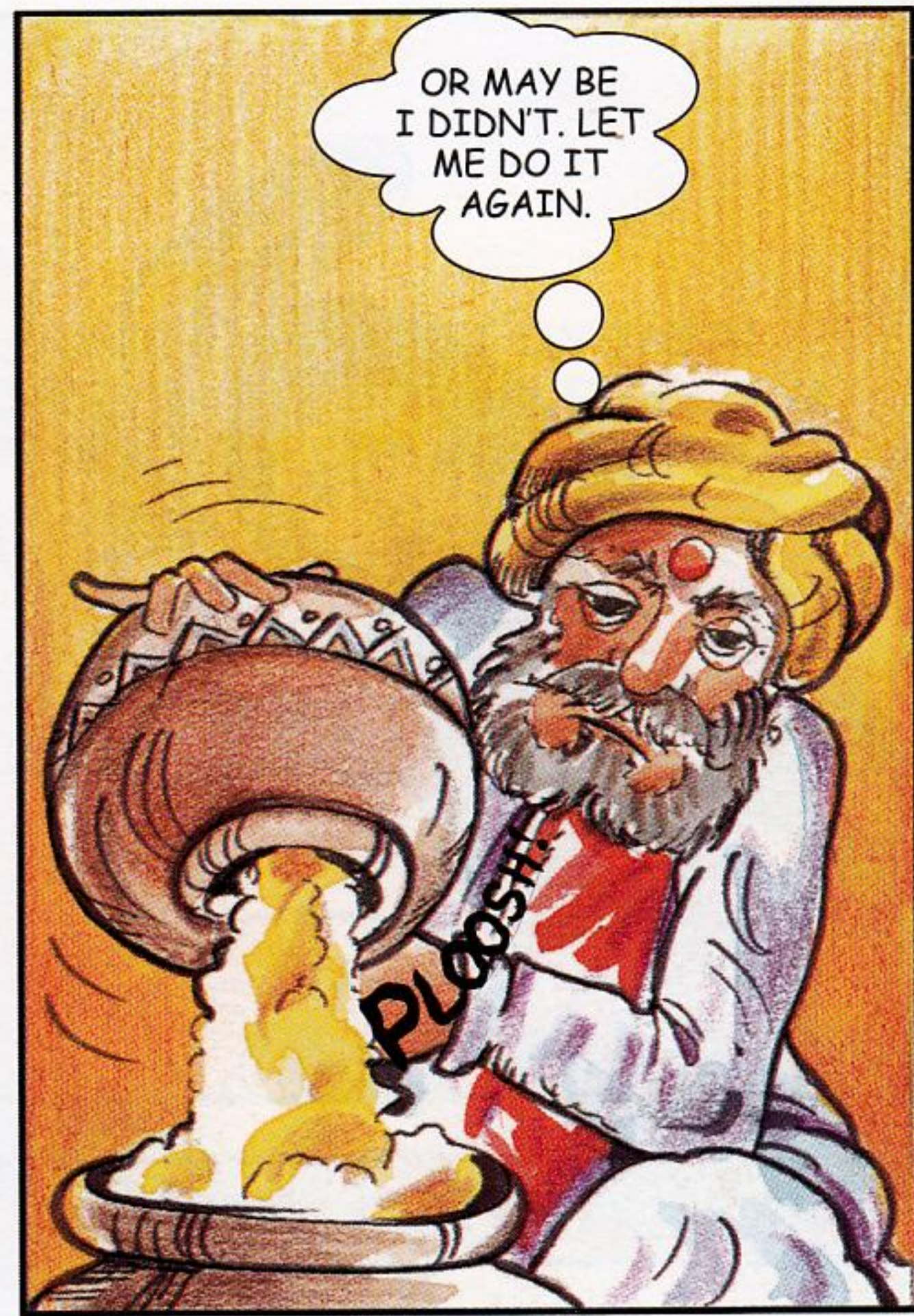
ONE DAY IN A NEARBY VILLAGE...







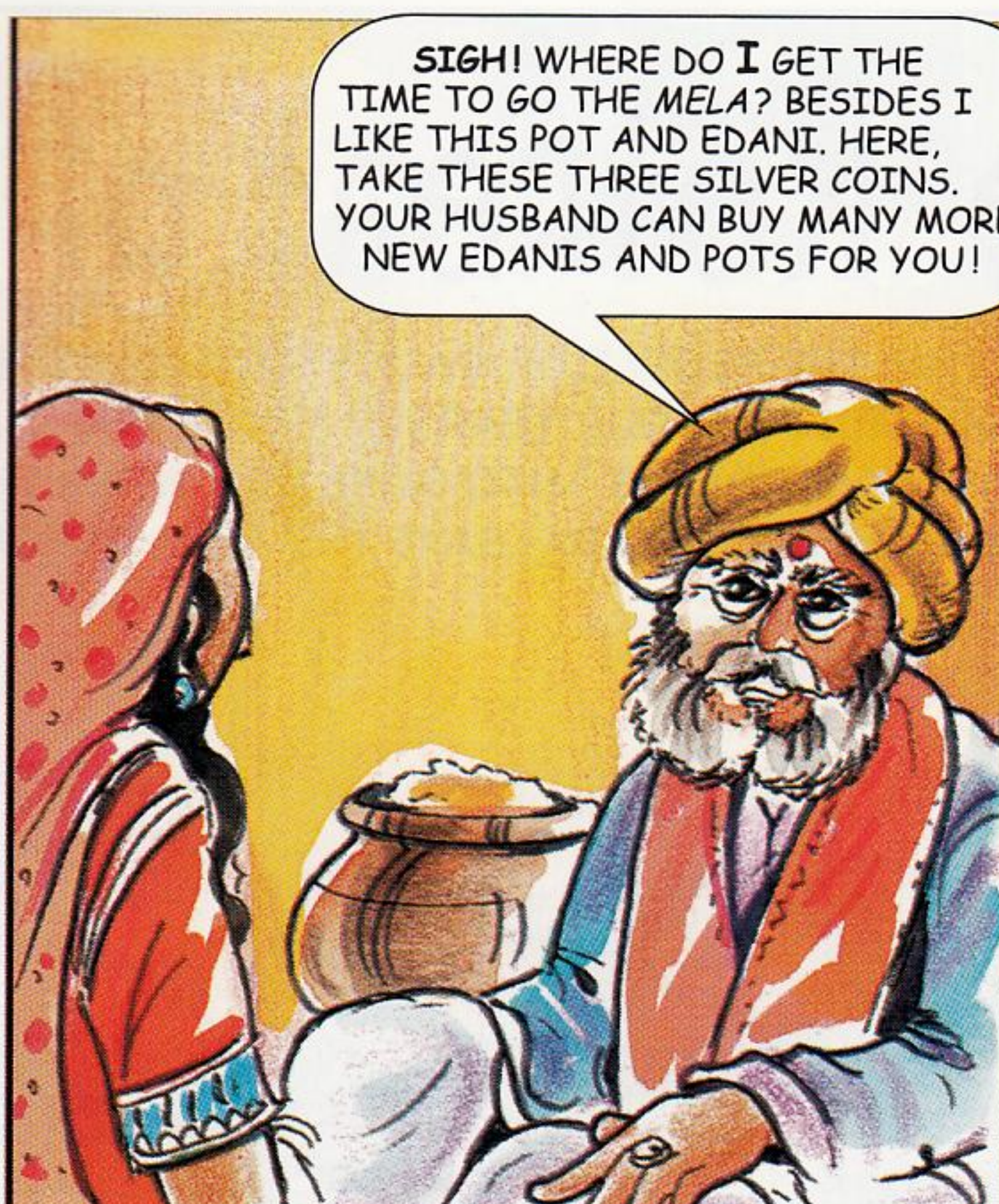




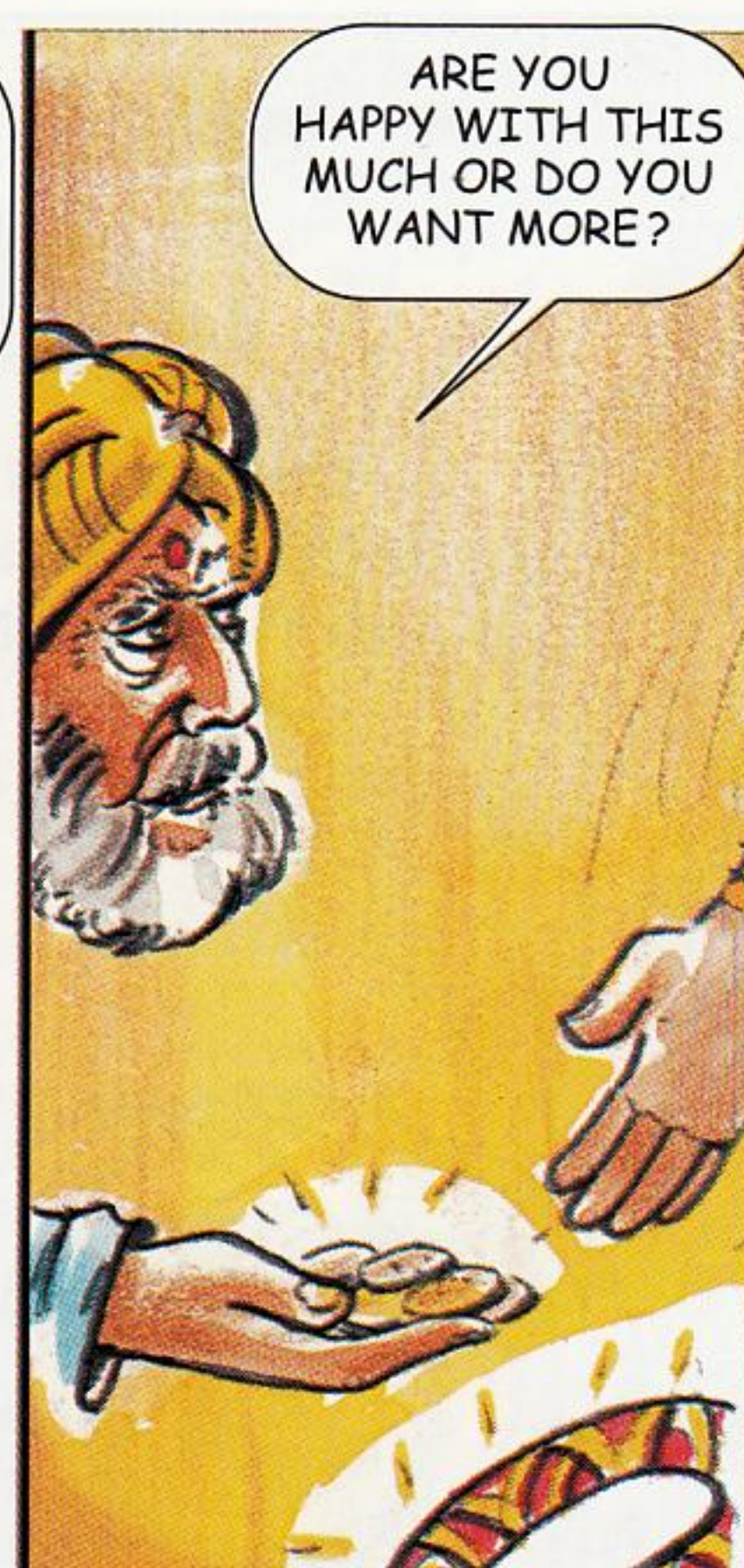




WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, SETHJI?! WHAT WILL I CARRY MY GHEE IN AND WHAT WILL I TELL MY HUSBAND? HE GOT THESE FOR ME FROM A MELA FOR TEN RUPEES!



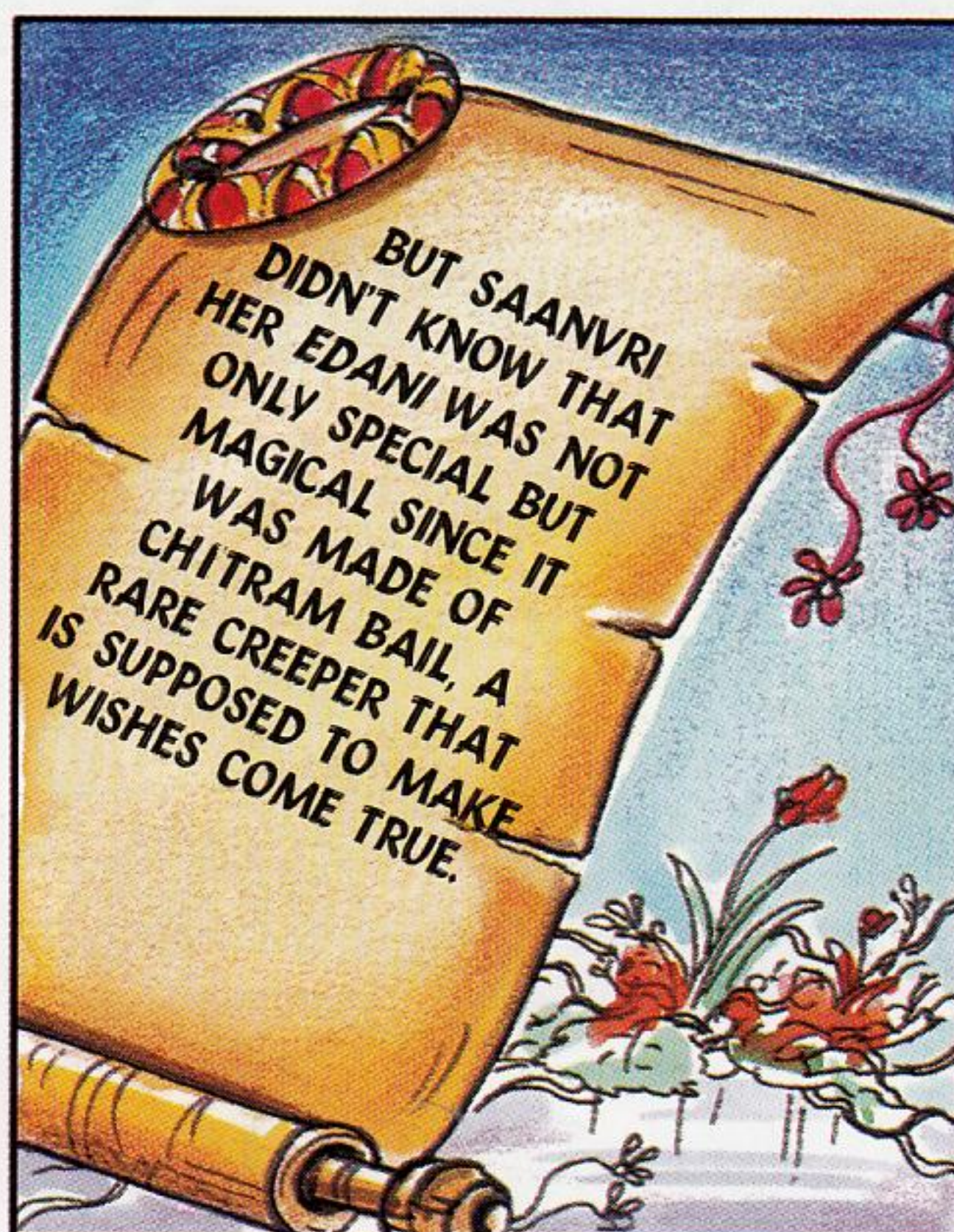
SIGH! WHERE DO I GET THE TIME TO GO THE MELA? BESIDES I LIKE THIS POT AND EDANI. HERE, TAKE THESE THREE SILVER COINS. YOUR HUSBAND CAN BUY MANY MORE NEW EDANIS AND POTS FOR YOU!



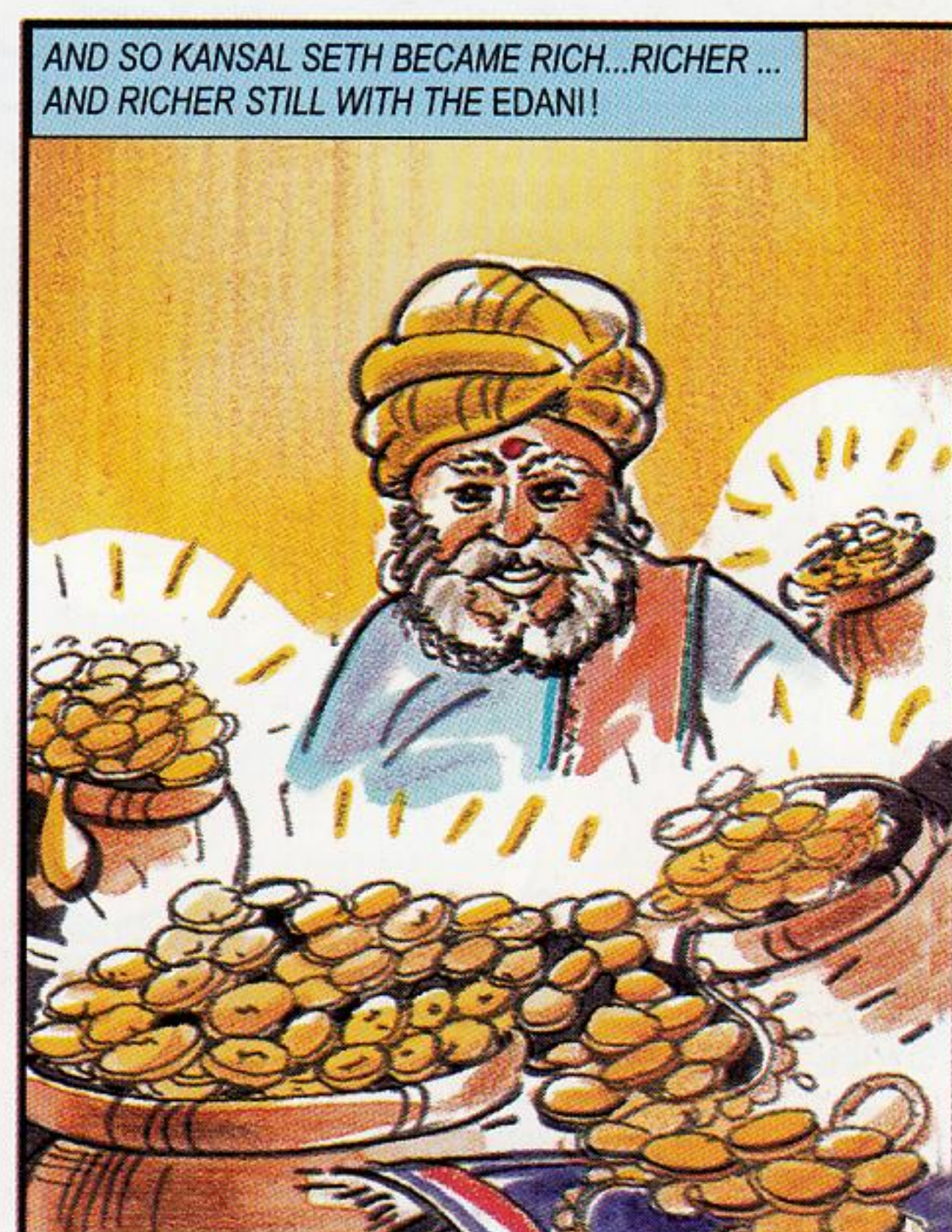
ARE YOU HAPPY WITH THIS MUCH OR DO YOU WANT MORE?



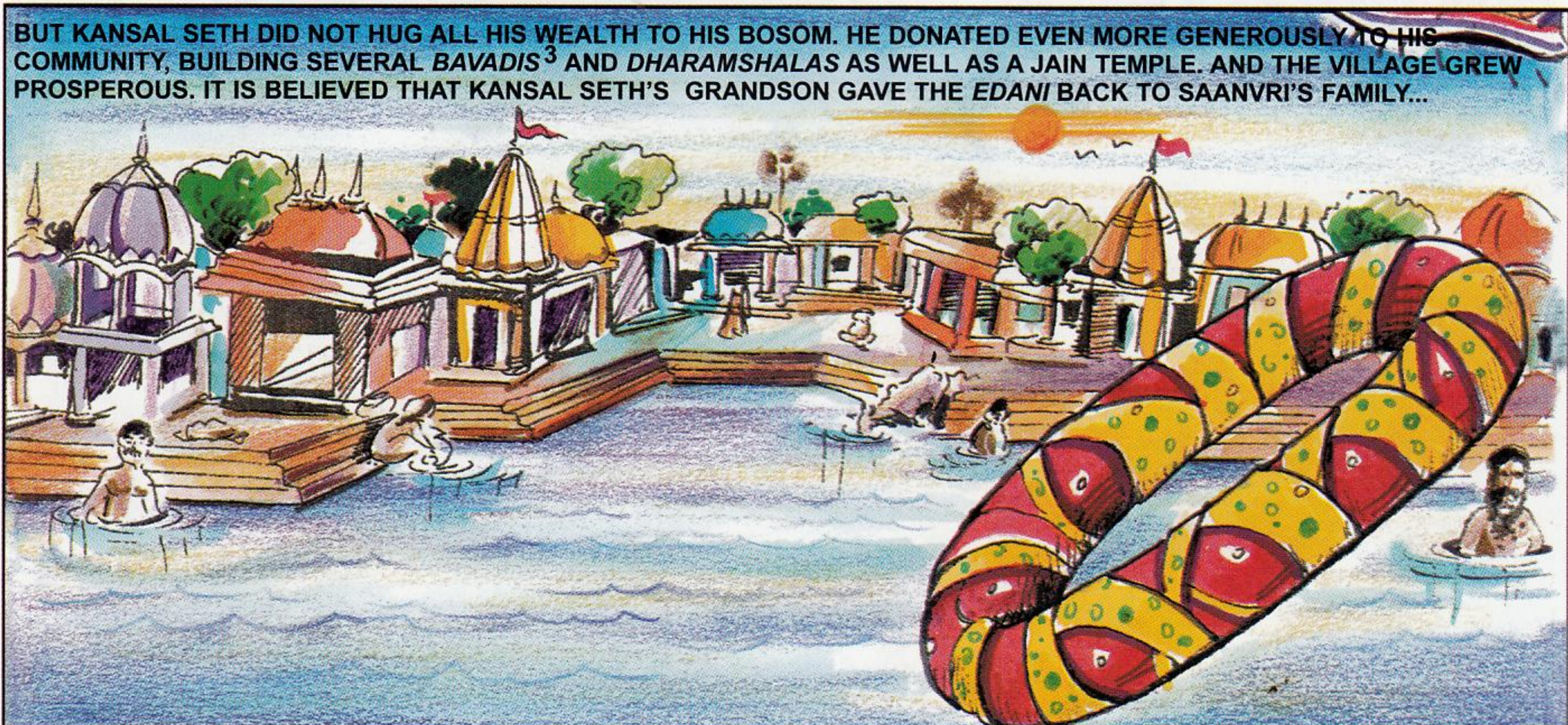
HAPPY? GULP! SURE I AM!



BUT SAANVRI DIDN'T KNOW THAT HER EDANI WAS NOT ONLY SPECIAL BUT MAGICAL SINCE IT WAS MADE OF CHITRAM BAIL, A RARE CREEPER THAT IS SUPPOSED TO MAKE WISHES COME TRUE.



AND SO KANSAL SETH BECAME RICH...RICHER ... AND RICHER STILL WITH THE EDANI!

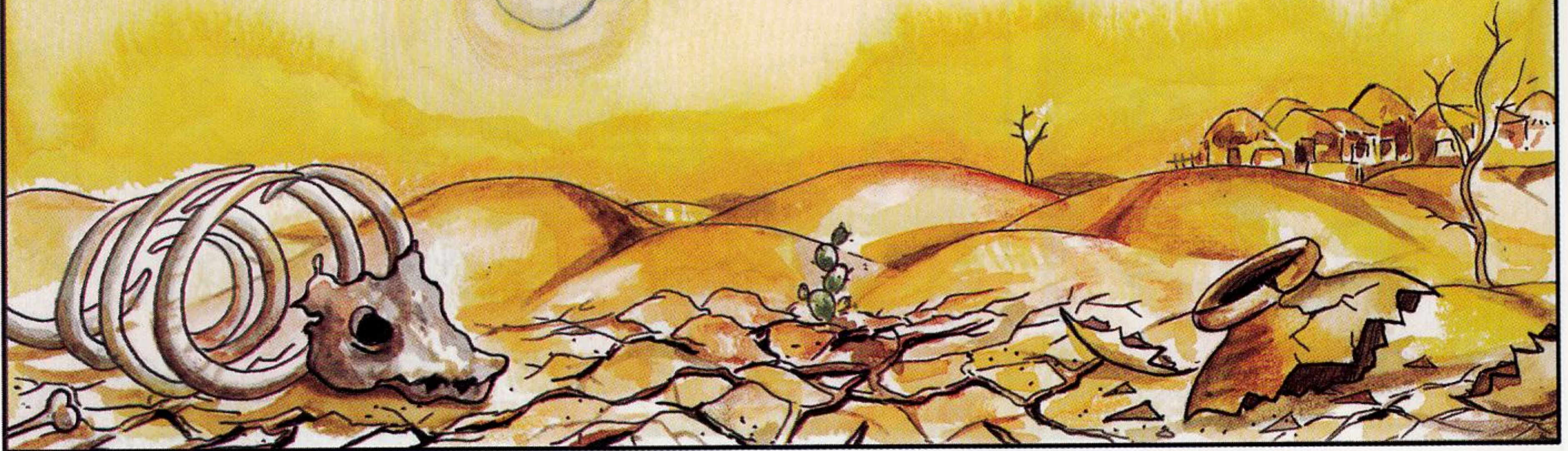


BUT KANSAL SETH DID NOT HUG ALL HIS WEALTH TO HIS BOSOM. HE DONATED EVEN MORE GENEROUSLY TO HIS COMMUNITY, BUILDING SEVERAL BAVADIS<sup>3</sup> AND DHARAMSHALAS AS WELL AS A JAIN TEMPLE. AND THE VILLAGE GREW PROSPEROUS. IT IS BELIEVED THAT KANSAL SETH'S GRANDSON GAVE THE EDANI BACK TO SAANVRI'S FAMILY...



# The Retreat of Hakda

ONCE UPON A TIME THE PEOPLE OF MADH PRADESH WERE FACED WITH A SEVERE DROUGHT. WITH NO RAIN FOR FOUR YEARS IN A ROW, THE LAND HAD BECOME PARCHED AND THE *BAVADIS* AND *SAROVARS*<sup>1</sup> HAD GONE DRY. WHEN THE CATTLE STARTED DYING, SEVERAL FAMILIES DECIDED TO LEAVE THE AREA BEFORE IT WAS TOO LATE...



ONE SUCH UNFORTUNATE FAMILY WAS THAT OF CHARAN MAMADHIYA.<sup>2</sup> THEY DECIDED TO MOVE TO NANANGARH, A TOWN ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER SINDHU. A MUSLIM EMPEROR CALLED SOOMRA RULED OVER NANANGARH. HIS SON WAS CALLED NURAN. MAMADH HAD SEVEN DAUGHTERS. BUT THEY WERE NO ORDINARY WOMEN. THEY HAD DIVINE POWERS AND WERE REVERED AS SEVEN GODDESSES. ONE DAY IN THEIR NEW HOME...



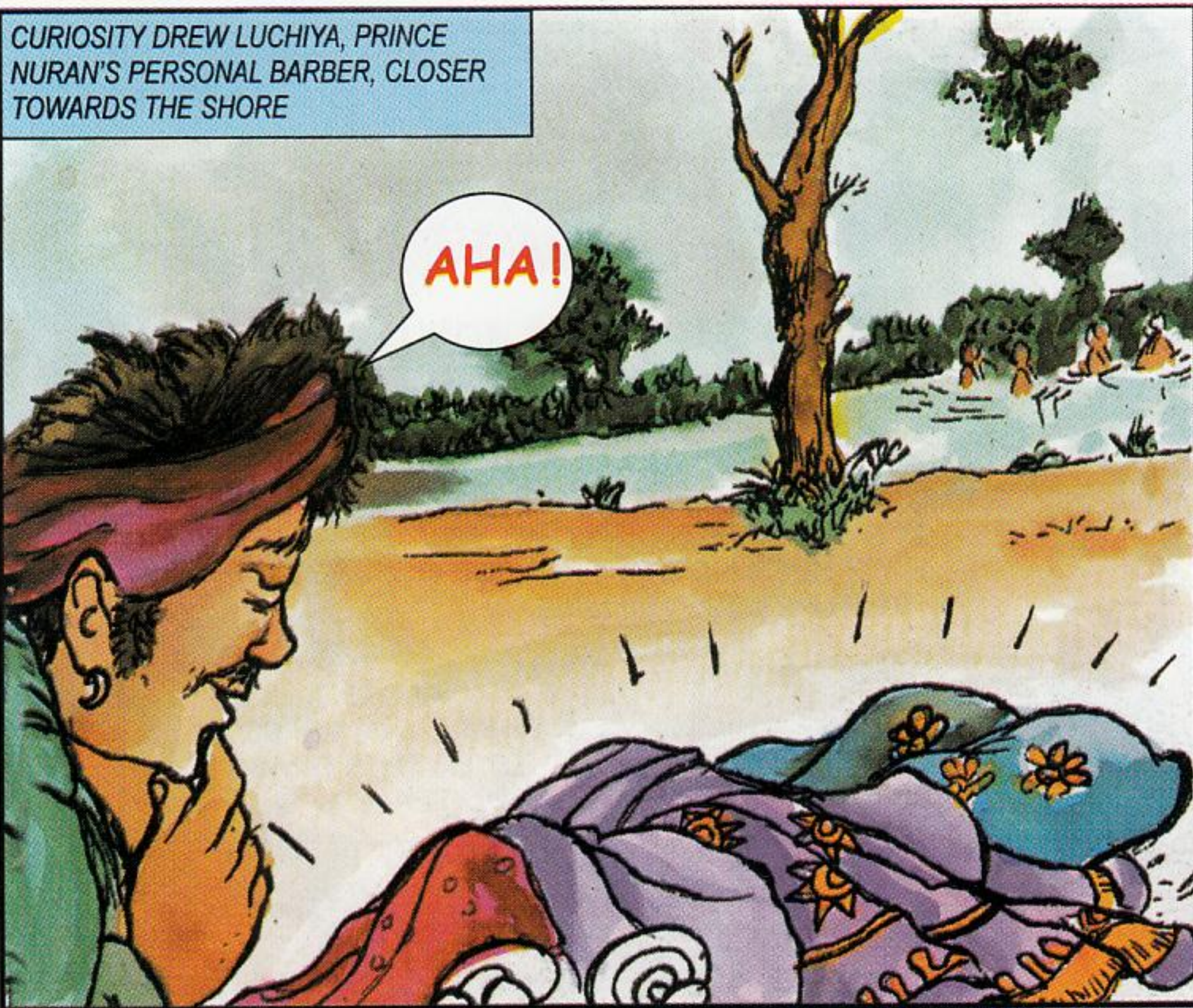
1 Step wells and ponds 2. Mamadh is a sub-caste of the charan community who are bards and geneologists. They also rear cattle  
3. Spinning wheel.







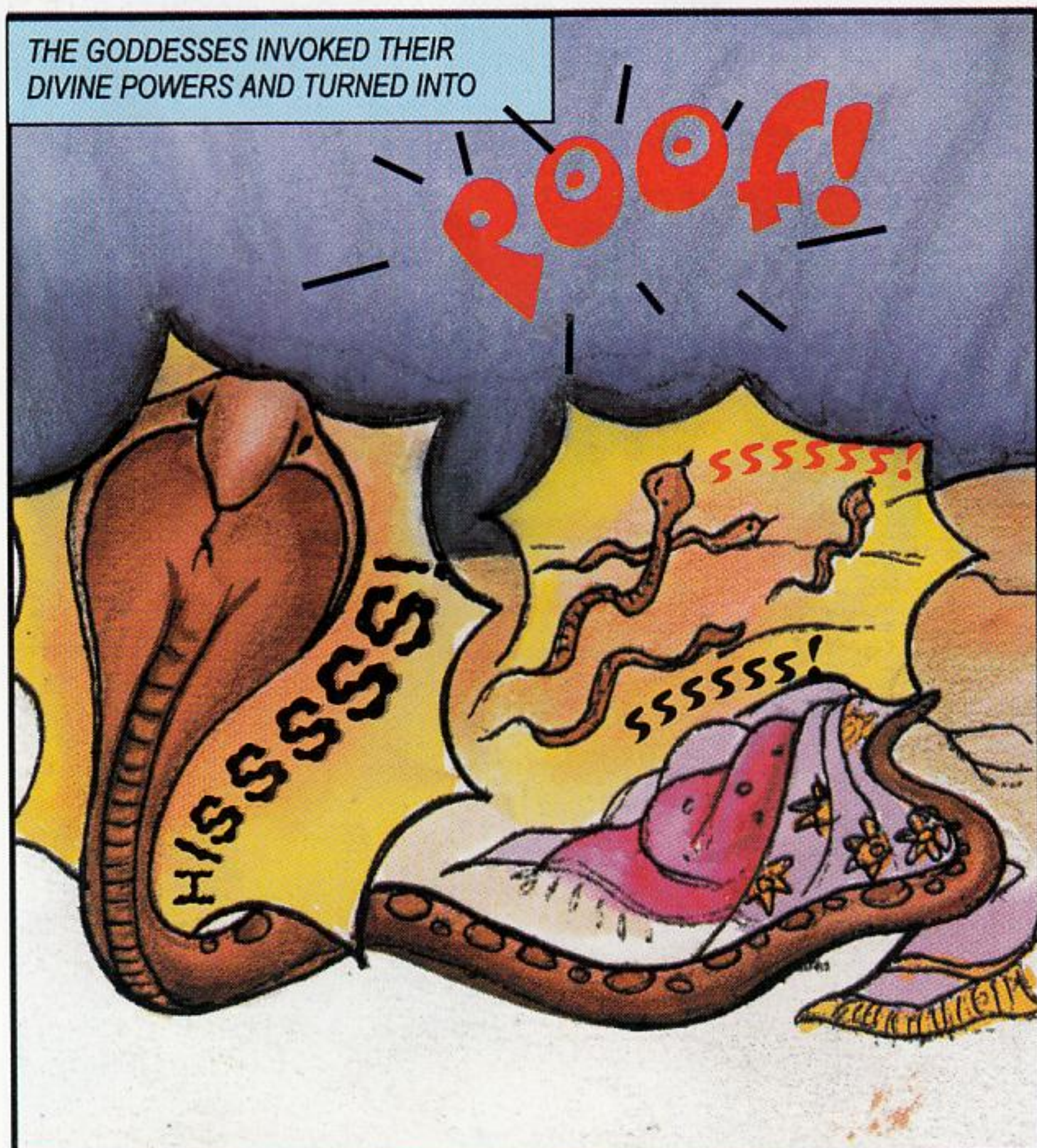
CURIOSITY DREW LUCHIYA, PRINCE NURAN'S PERSONAL BARBER, CLOSER TOWARDS THE SHORE



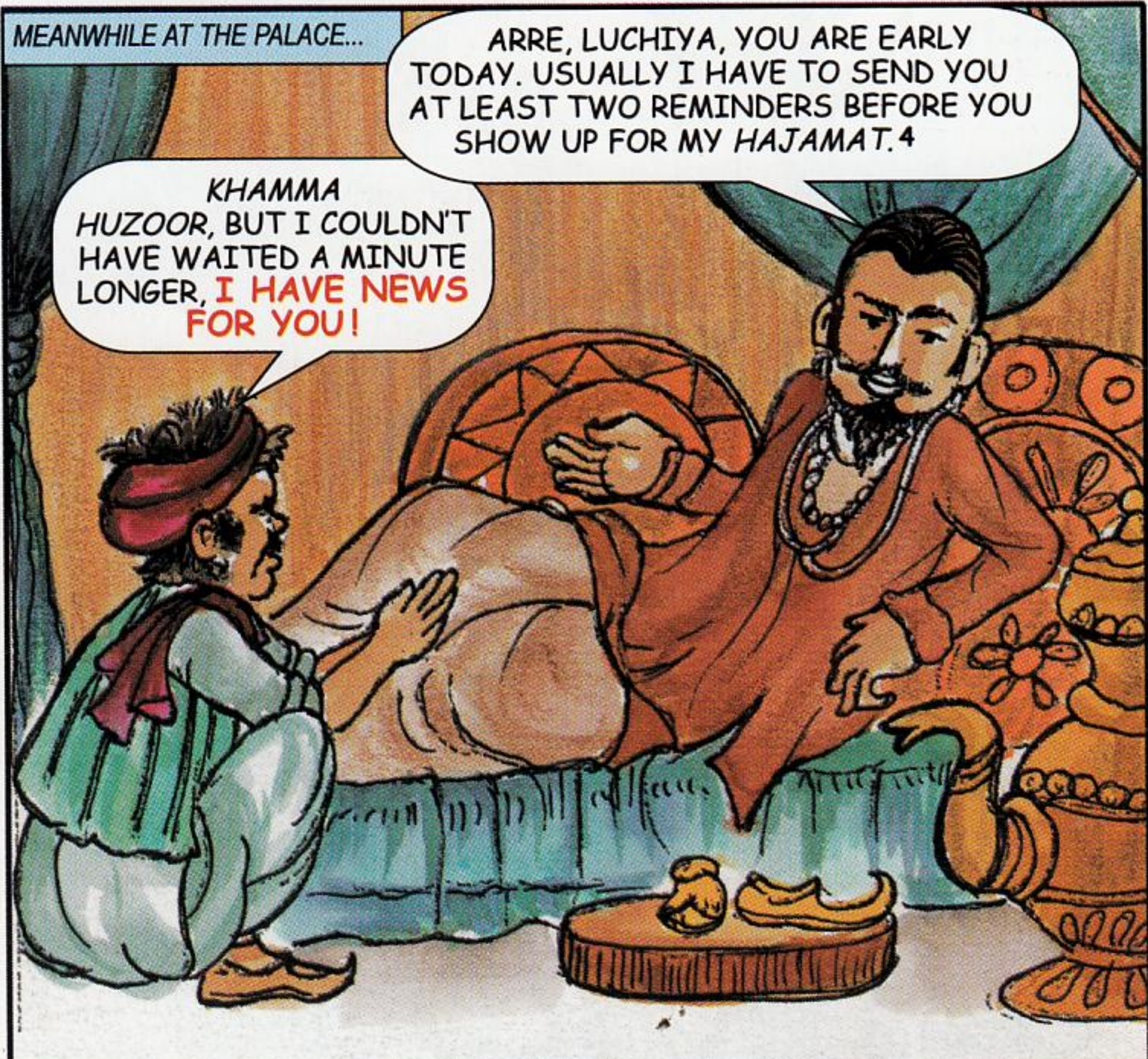
SHORTLY AFTERWARDS...



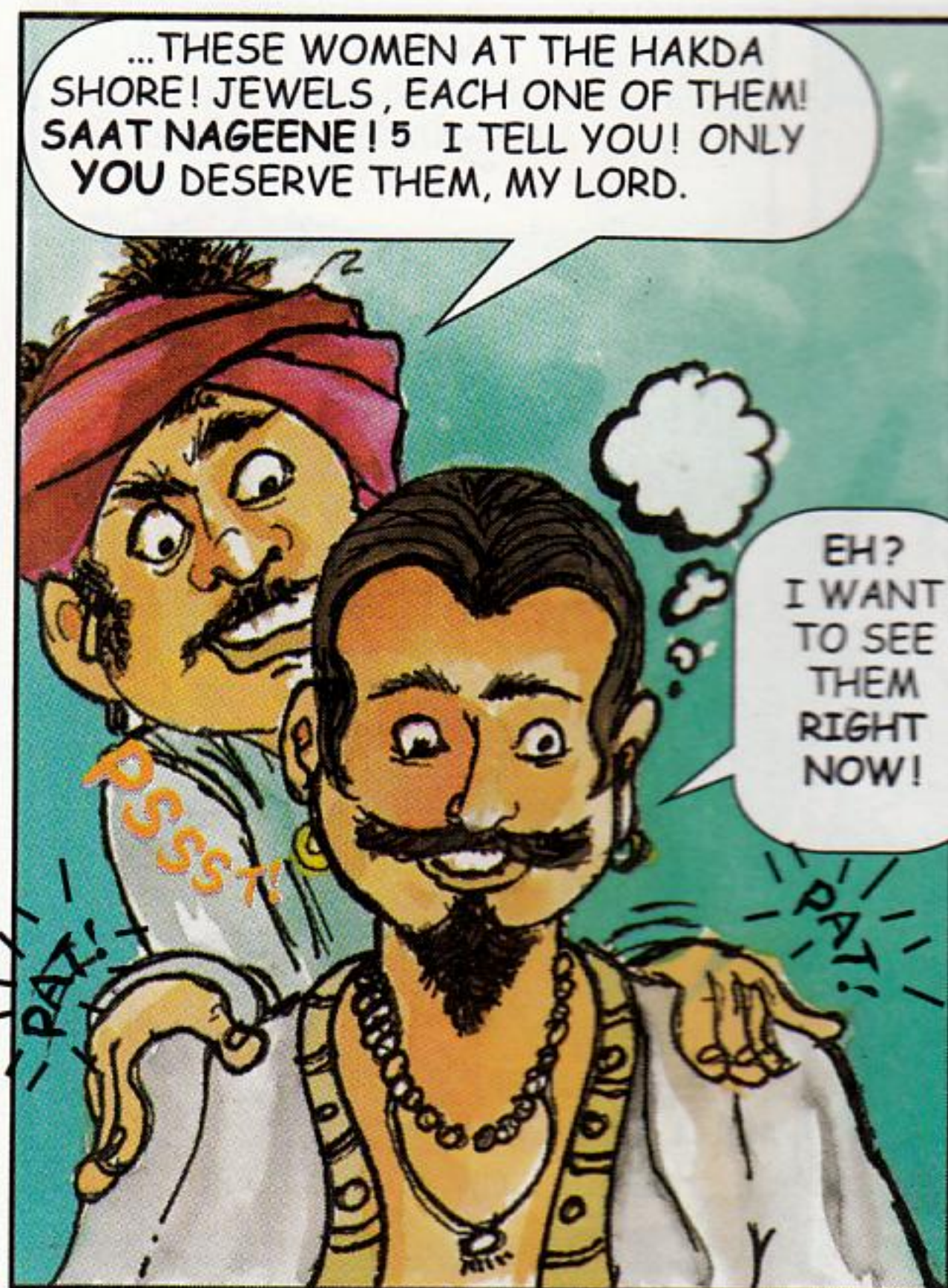
THE GODDESSES INVOKED THEIR DIVINE POWERS AND TURNED INTO



MEANWHILE AT THE PALACE...





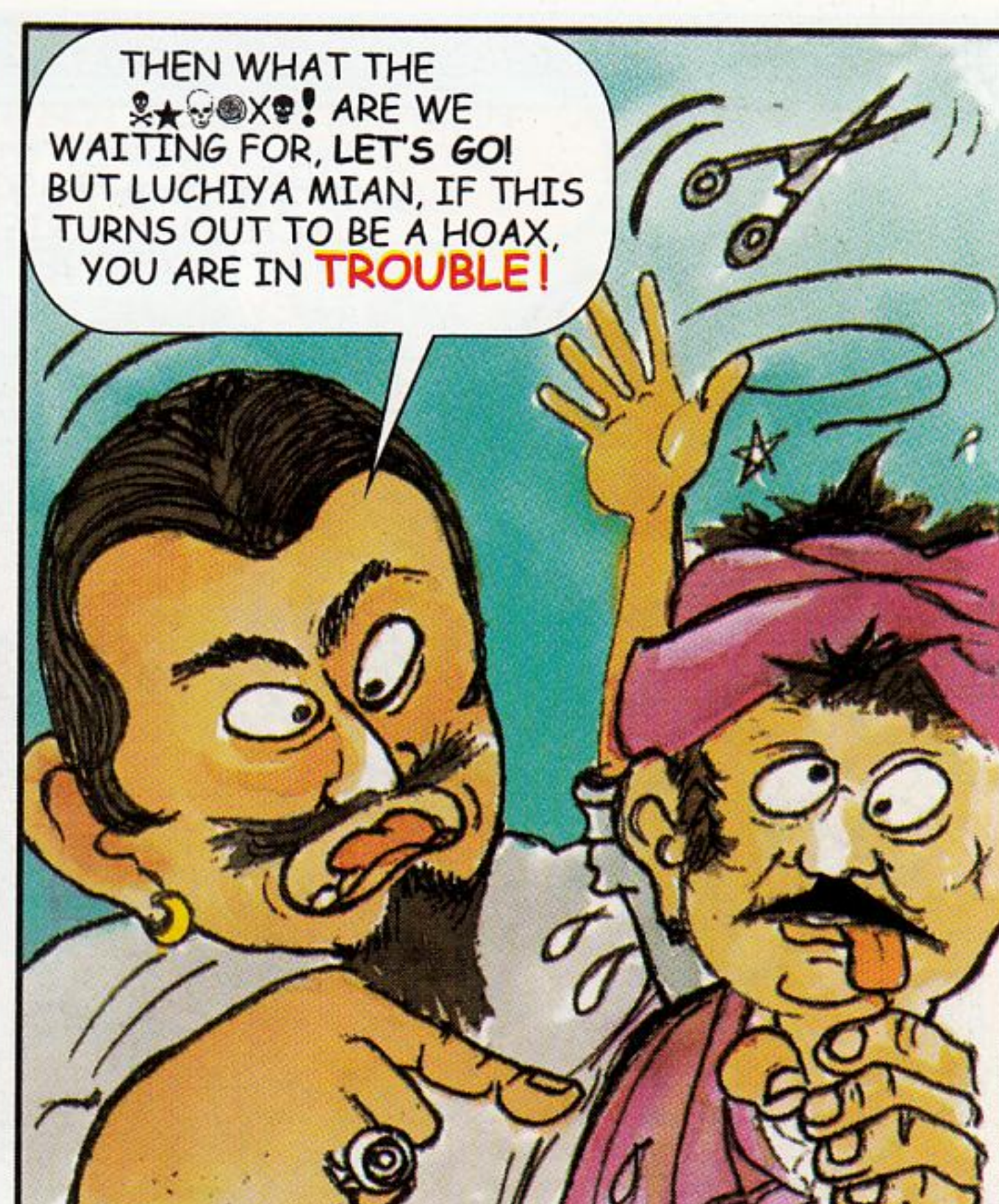


...THESE WOMEN AT THE HAKDA SHORE! JEWELS, EACH ONE OF THEM! SAAT NAGEENE! 5 I TELL YOU! ONLY YOU DESERVE THEM, MY LORD.

EH? I WANT TO SEE THEM RIGHT NOW!



THEY MUST BE STILL BATHING IN THE HAKDA!



THEN WHAT THE ~~XXX~~ ARE WE WAITING FOR, LET'S GO! BUT LUCHIYA MIAN, IF THIS TURNS OUT TO BE A HOAX, YOU ARE IN TROUBLE!



AT HAKDA, THERE WAS NO SIGN OF THE SEVEN SISTERS.

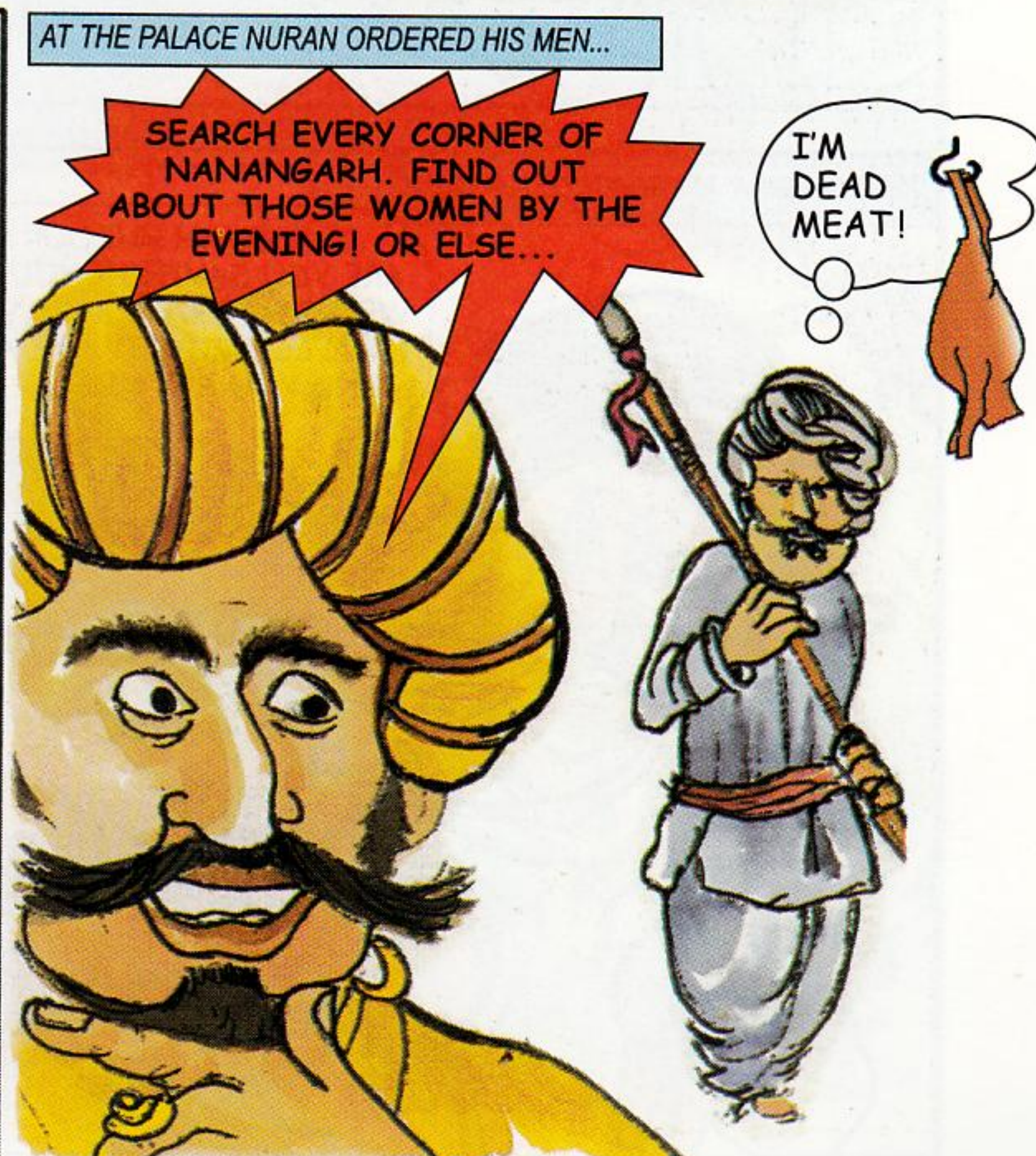
HUH...UH...I SWEAR ON SEETHLA DEVI, 6 I SAW THEM, BEAUTIES I SAY!

LUCHIYA YOU RASCAL, HAVE YOU BEEN DRINKING?!



SUDDENLY

HUZOOR, HOOOO ! LOOK, I WAS NOT DREAMING! THESE ARE THEIR CLOTHES!



AT THE PALACE NURAN ORDERED HIS MEN...

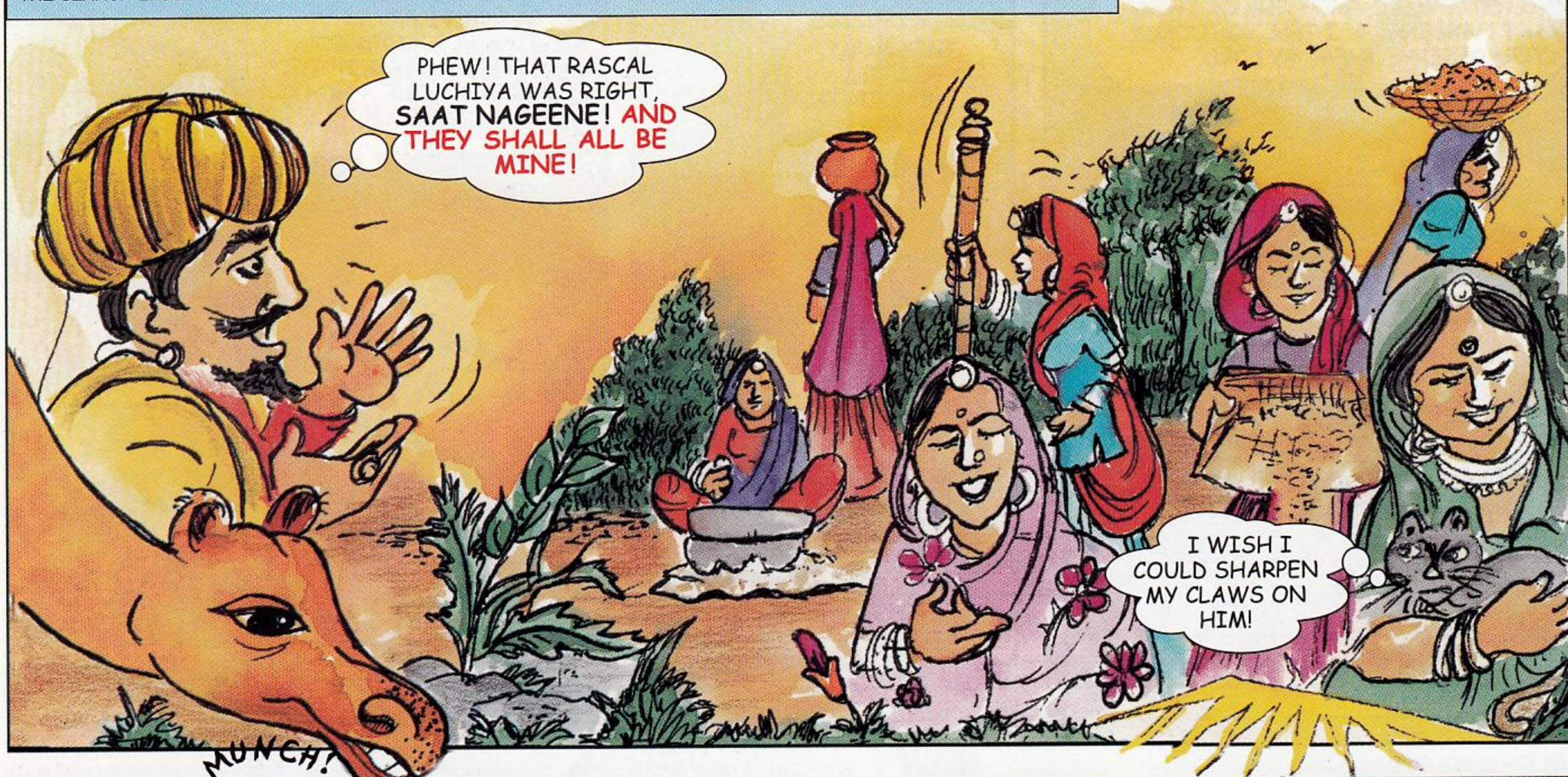
SEARCH EVERY CORNER OF NANANGARH. FIND OUT ABOUT THOSE WOMEN BY THE EVENING! OR ELSE...

I'M DEAD MEAT!

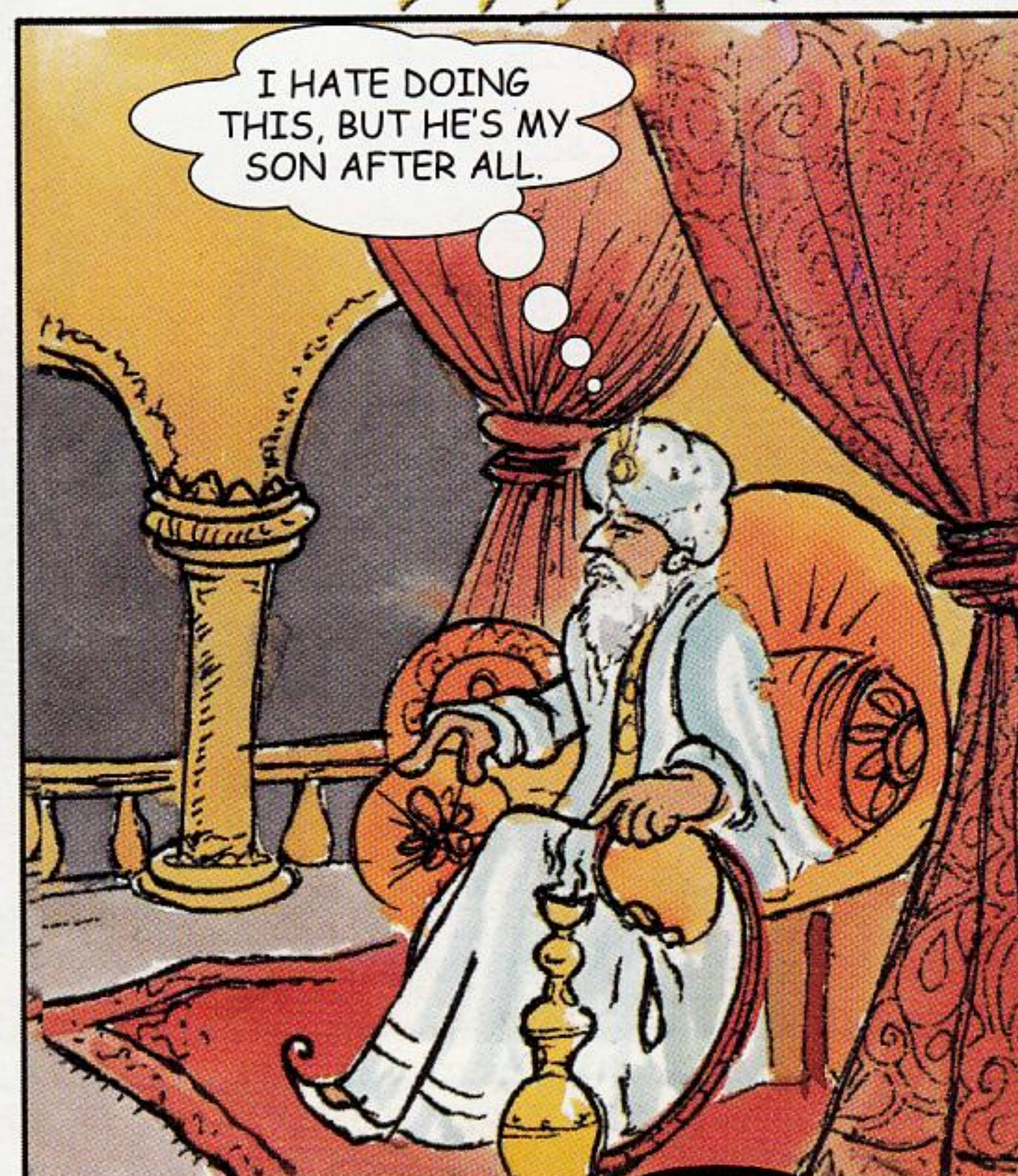
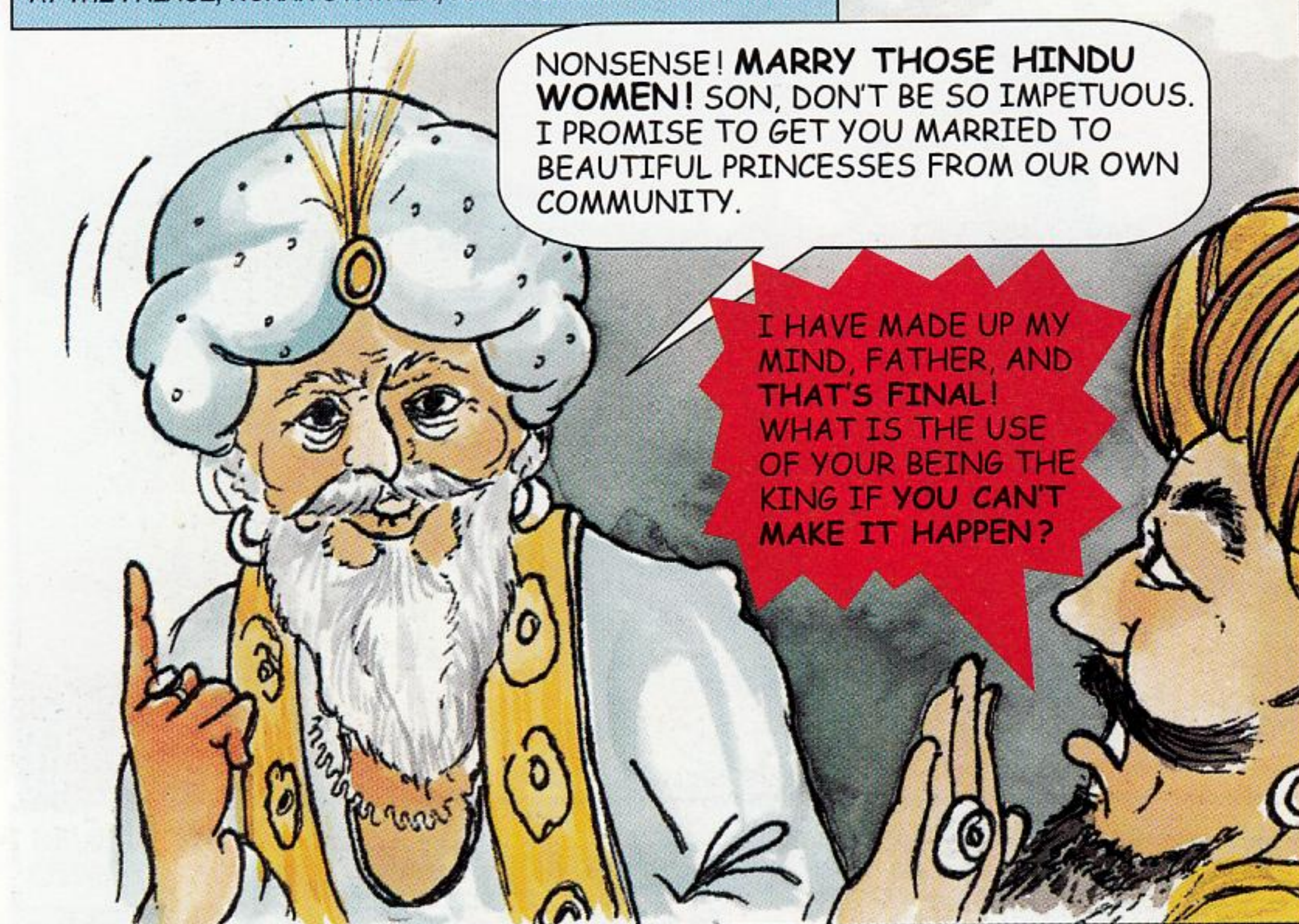
5. Seven gems. 6. A folk Goddess who is popularly believed to cure the contagious disease of small pox.



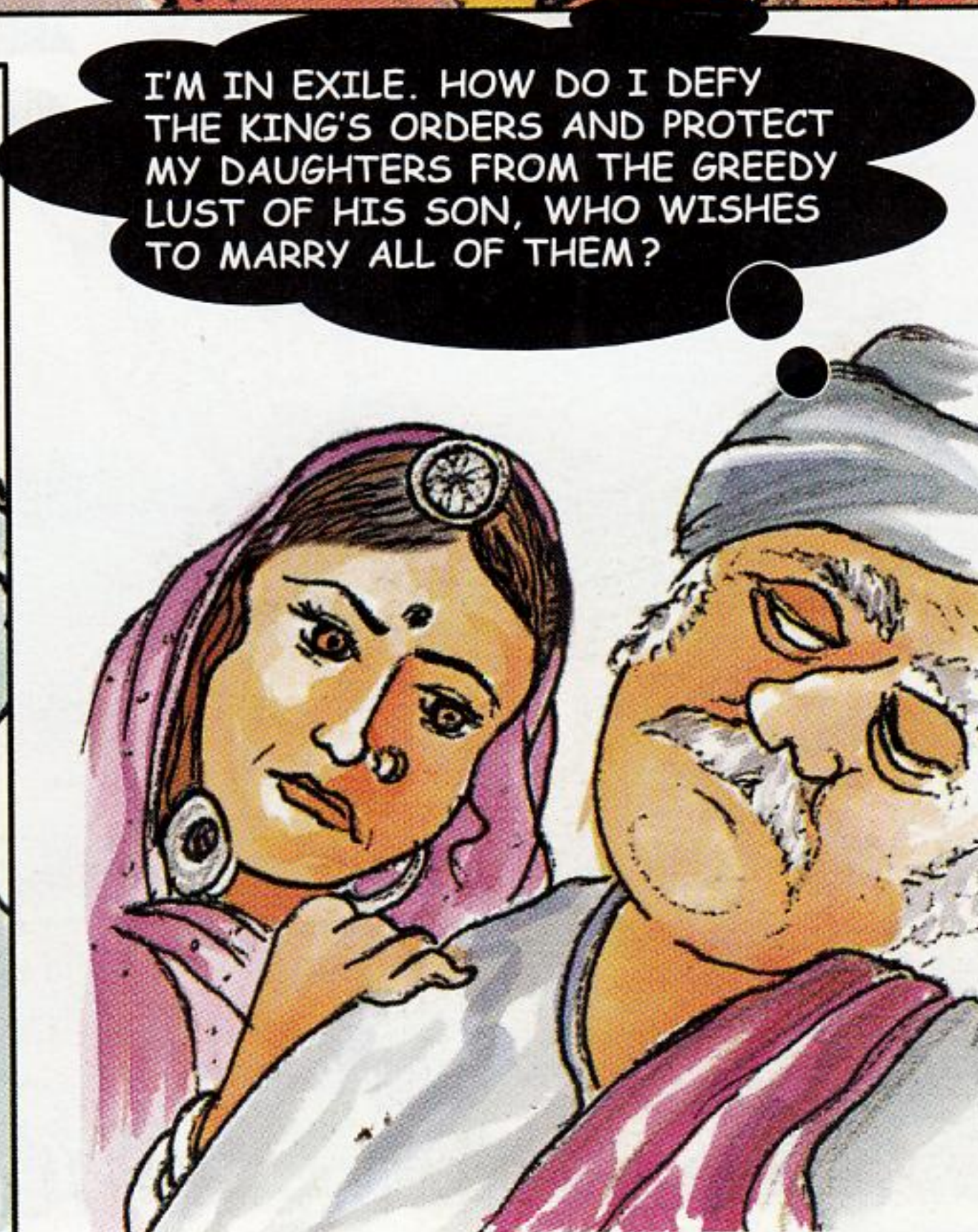
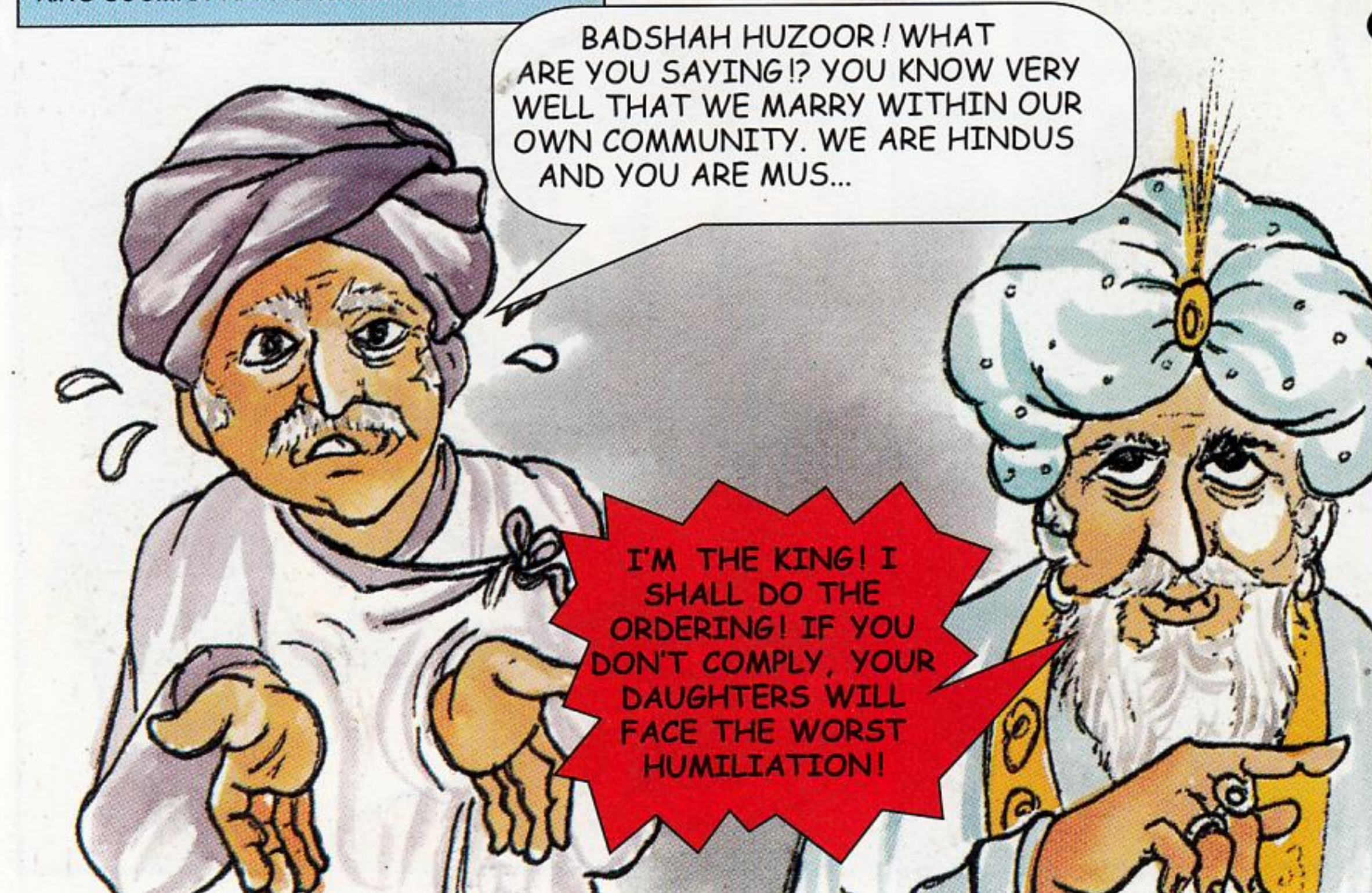
THE SEARCH ENDED AT CHARAN MAMADH'S HUT. DISGUISED AS A CAMEL HERDSMAN, NURAN SAW THE SEVEN SISTERS...



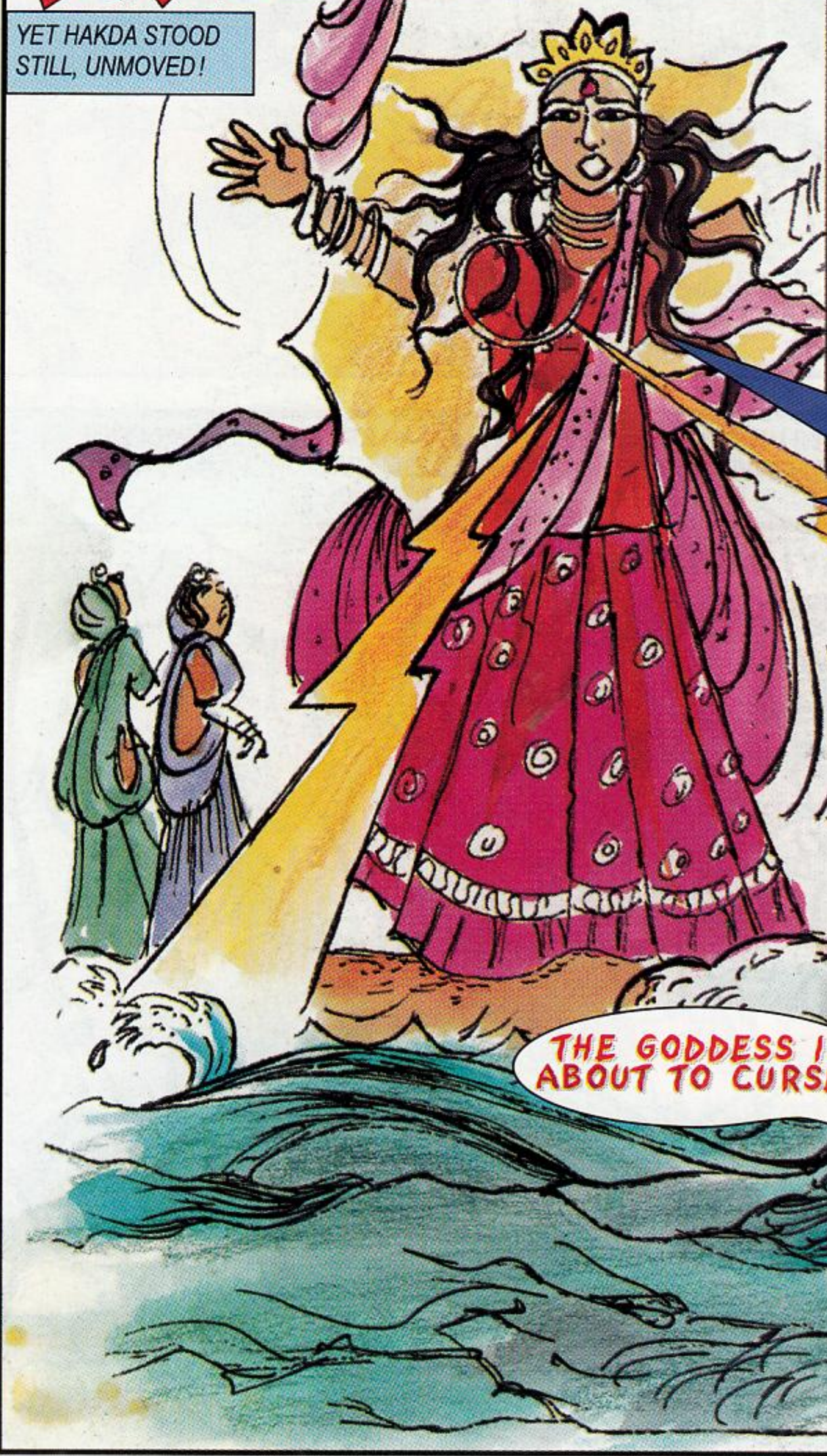
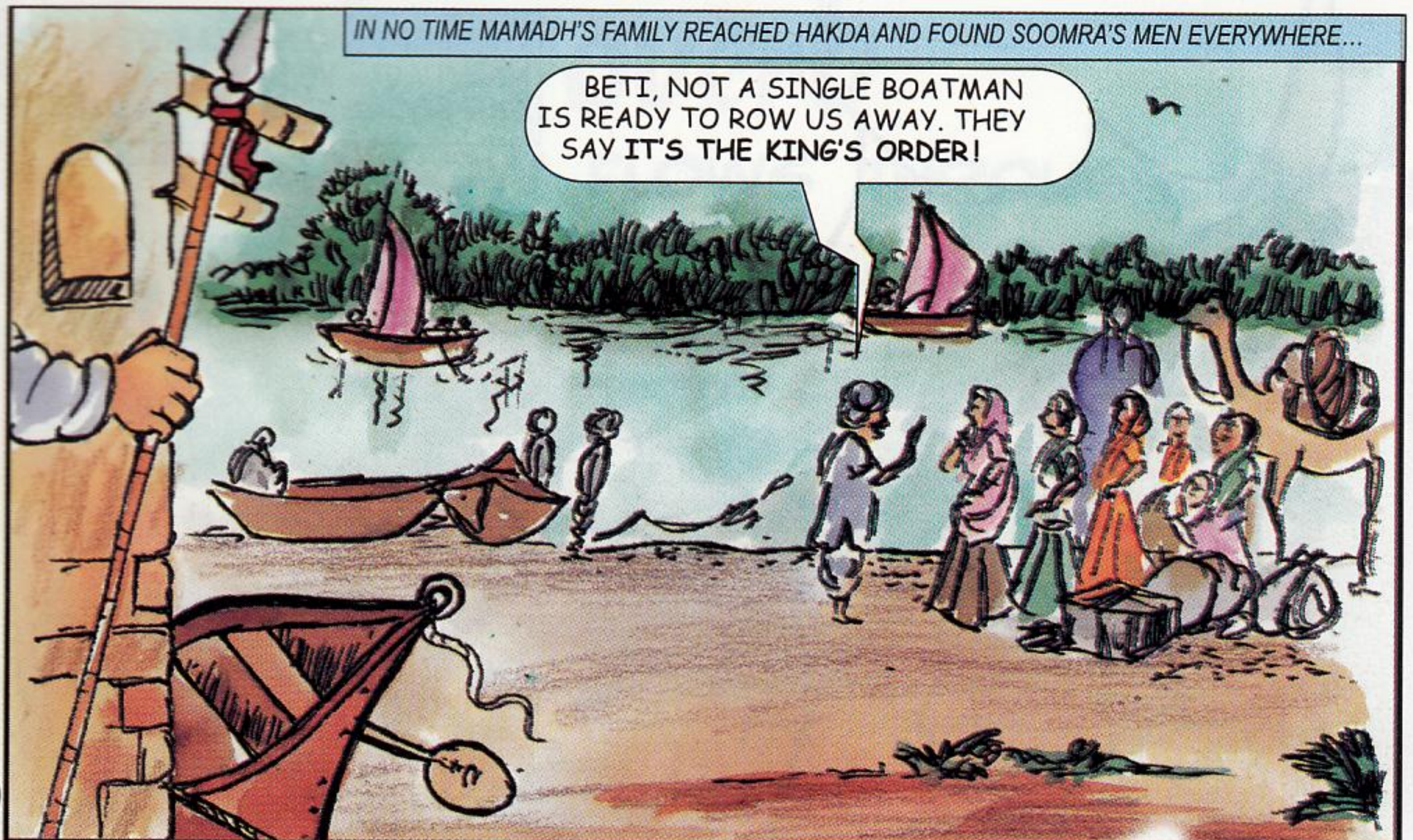
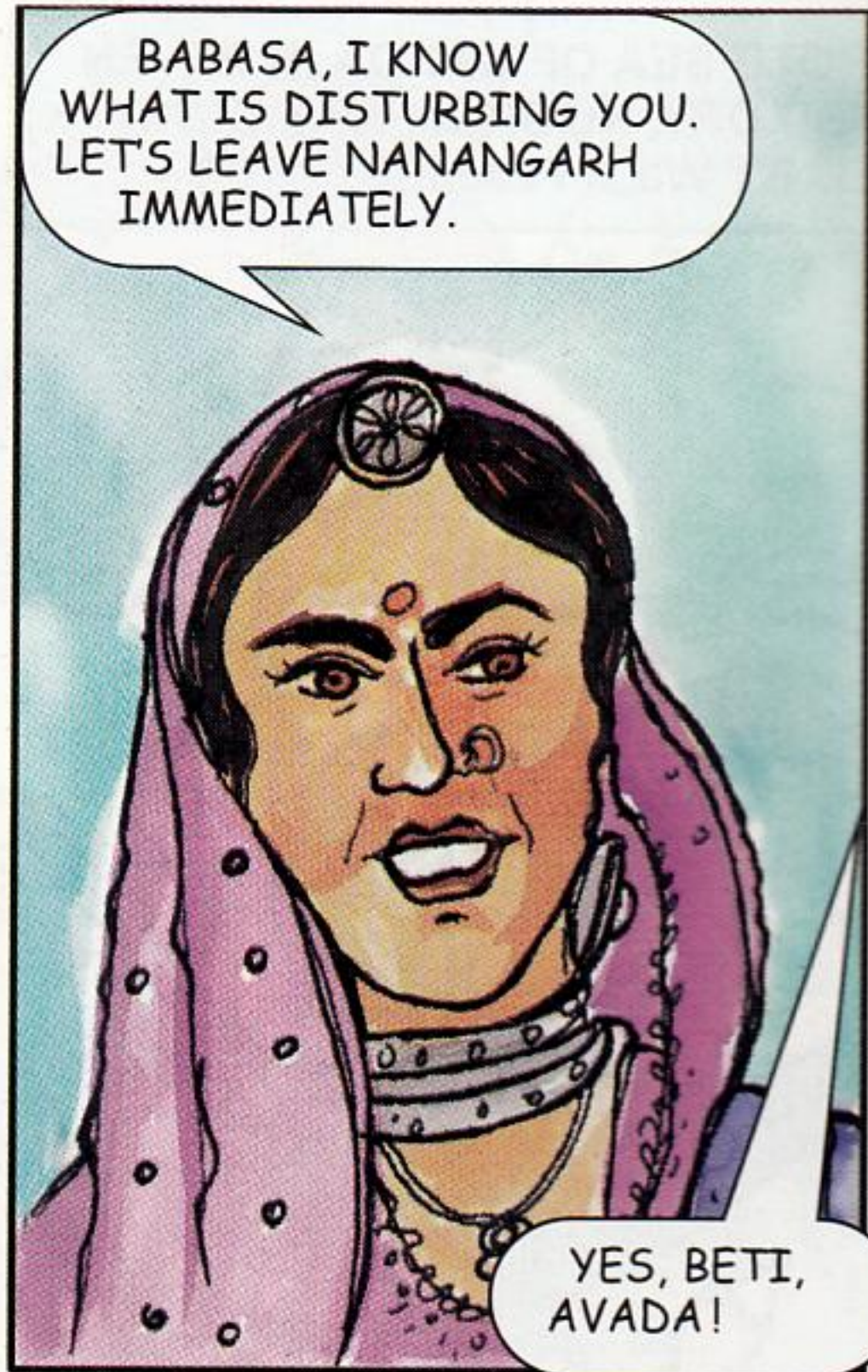
AT THE PALACE, NURAN'S FATHER, KING SOOMRA WAS FURIOUS.



KING SOOMRA APPROACHED MAMADH...

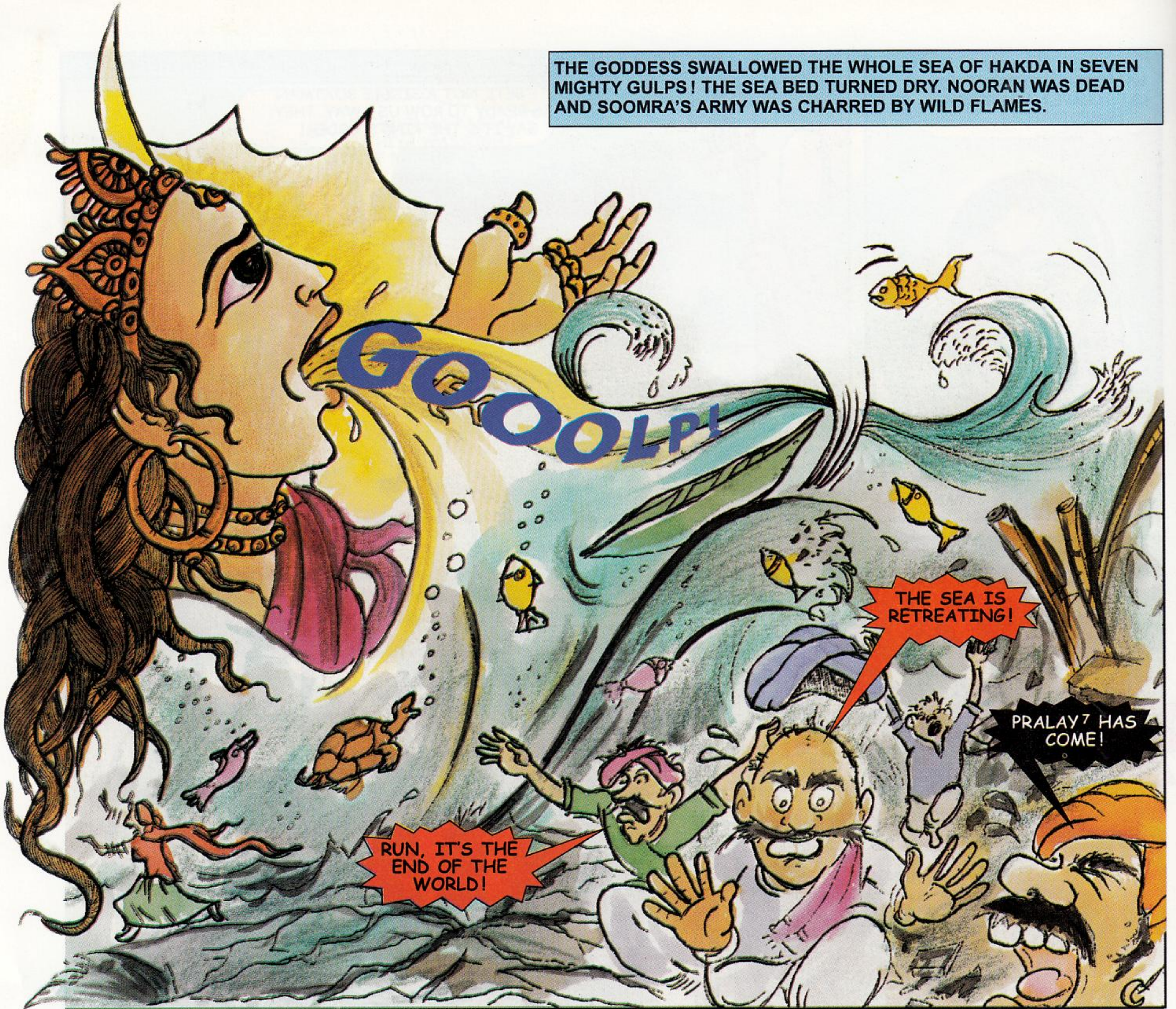






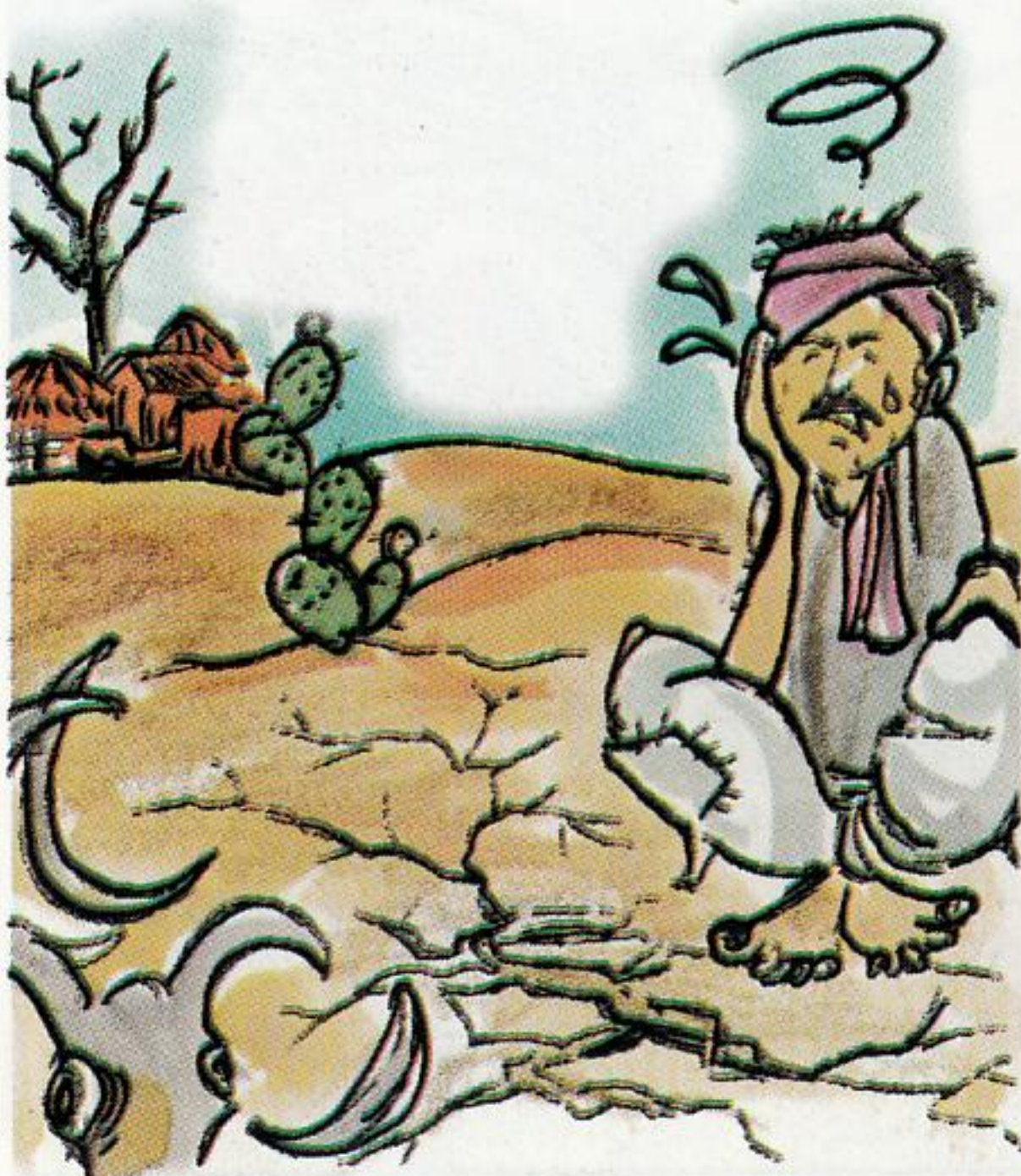


THE GODDESS SWALLOWED THE WHOLE SEA OF HAKDA IN SEVEN MIGHTY GULPS! THE SEA BED TURNED DRY. NOORAN WAS DEAD AND SOOMRA'S ARMY WAS CHARRED BY WILD FLAMES.



DEATH AND DESTRUCTION TOOK OVER NANANGARH AND THE SEA BED BECAME DRY. TODAY THE VILLAGE 'BALNA' STANDS ON IT.

BACK AT MADH PRADESH THE RETURN OF THE SEVEN GODDESSES WAS CELEBRATED WITH GREAT JOY! EVEN TODAY THE GODDESSES ARE WORSHIPPED IN VILLAGES AND DHANIS AS AAYI MATA. 8



7. Apocalyptic cosmic upheaval. 8. The mother Goddess has arrived

THE END



# A local proverb

"THAT RIVER NOW FLOWS THROUGH MULTAN"

Variations: The water is now in Multan  
The water is now Multani  
Go find the water in Multan  
The river has moved to Multan

## English equivalents:

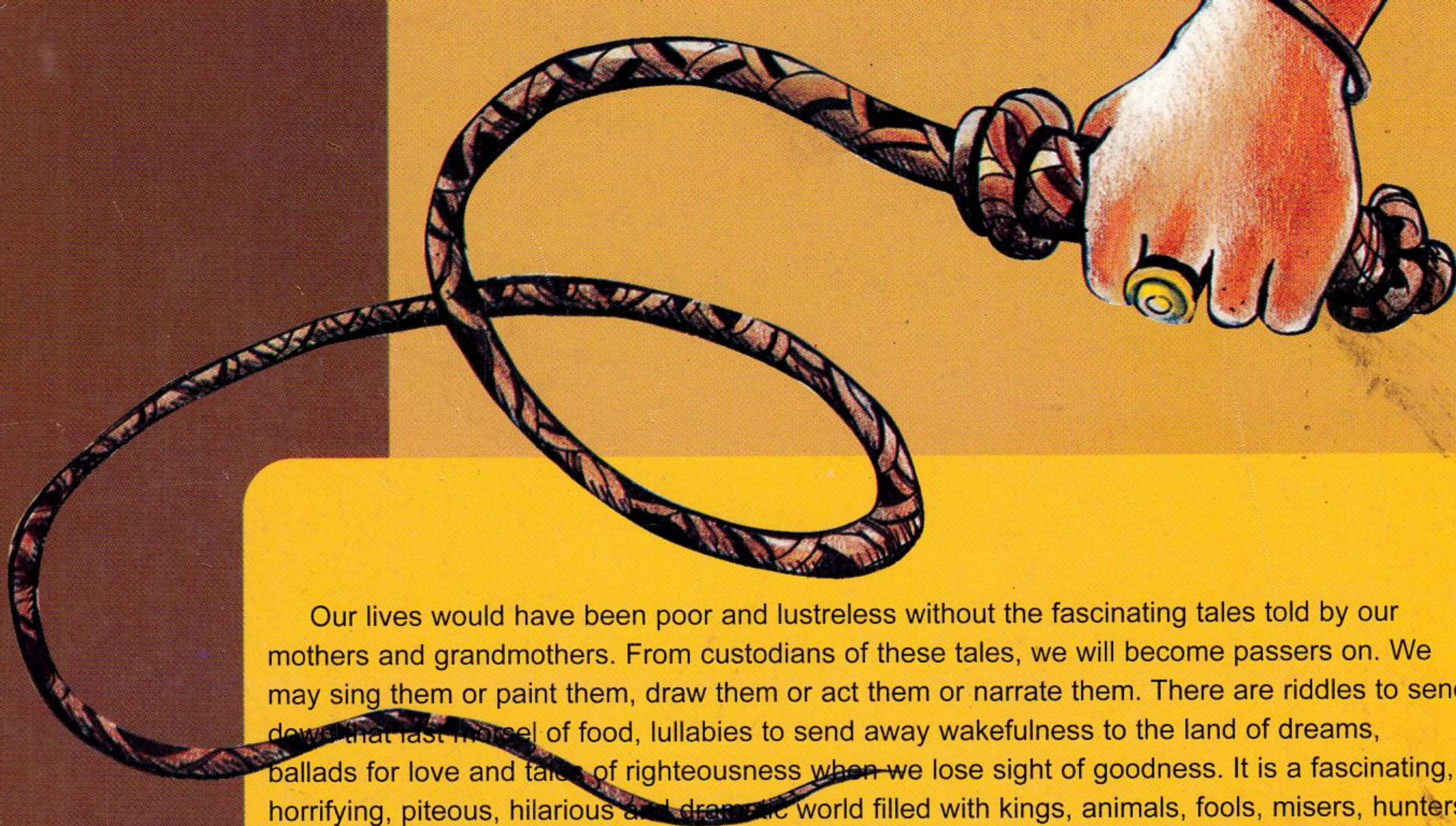
To shut the stable when the horses have bolted.  
To cry over spilt milk.

Once upon a time, a nomad who owned a thousand bulls wandered into Madh Pradesh. The king of a region near Multan abducted the nomad's beautiful wife. The nomad made many entreaties to the king to return his wife to him, but to no avail. The king did not relent. So the nomad decided to teach him a lesson. A river flowed

through this region. The nomad used his thousand bulls to dam up the river's flow and divert it away from the kingdom of the unjust king. Because of the damming, the river changed its course and started to flow towards Multan. This made the king very unhappy and he offered to return the nomad's wife to him, upon which the nomad replied, "That river now flows through Multan."

This proverb is used even today to signify repentance over an action when it is too late to be rectified.





Our lives would have been poor and lustreless without the fascinating tales told by our mothers and grandmothers. From custodians of these tales, we will become passers on. We may sing them or paint them, draw them or act them or narrate them. There are riddles to send down that last morsel of food, lullabies to send away wakefulness to the land of dreams, ballads for love and tales of righteousness when we lose sight of goodness. It is a fascinating, horrifying, piteous, hilarious and dramatic world filled with kings, animals, fools, misers, hunters, shepherds, ghosts, magic, demons, fairies, gods, local heroes, the wicked and the righteous.

No one knows how this world was created. One supposes that it gets created everytime there is a teller and a listener. Folklore enables us to see how intelligence confronts power, compassion confronts wealth and women subvert a patriarchal world. While not marginalising politics, economics or success, it stresses each time that all these are less important than the mastery of living. Folklore gently separates for us information, knowledge and wisdom, according most importance to the last. It gives us the skill to deal with the inherent ambiguity, messiness, complexity and absurdity of life's twists and turns, for participating in humanity's struggle for greater meaning. It points out the weakness of knowledge without ethics, the visible without the invisible and analysis without synthesis.

Vivalok Comics brings to you this wonderworld of myths, legends and folktales through the much-loved medium of comic books. Comics lead you frame by frame into a visual world of colour and spectacle splashed with each illustrator's personal interpretation and skills. For a world hit by a homogenous meteor, Vivalok Comics is a refreshing depiction of the smallest geographical unit, the smallest societal unit, the smallest community. It celebrates the smallest suggestion of diversity showing that only a pluralistic society is sustainable. It transports you, with each painstaking detail, to a different world.

In this volume we invite you to walk with us on the golden sands of Madh Pradesh. Experience the vast beauty and the relentless ferocity of the desert and hear its plaintive songs and sounds wafting through the blue-black night. The stories in this volume share the heart aches of the immortal love stories of Madh Pradesh such as *Madechi Mumal*, the pain of women separated from their beloveds, such as the one in *Panihari*, the wonder of legends like the retreat of Hakda Lake and *Teelon ki Prol*, the bravery of *jhunjhars* like Buto Pir, and the sharp, incisive wit of the desert women, treaded by the harsh climate and the instinct to preserve their home and selves. And of course, there are the stories, perennial in their wisdom and humour, narrated from generation to generation. All this and more awaits you inside.



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ISBN 81-88251-03-8



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